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Thoughts and after-thoughts

Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree

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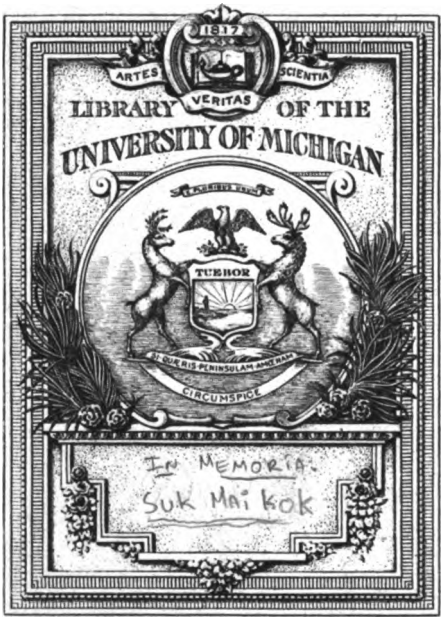

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Thoughts and After-Thoughts

By Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree

Cassell and Company, Limited
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1913

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TO

MINE ENEMY

I DEDICATE
THE FAULTS OF THIS BOOK

TO

MY FRIEND

I DEDICATE
WHAT VIRTUE IT MAY HAVE,
HOPING THUS TO GIVE PLEASURE TO BOTH.

H. B. T.

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OUR BETTERS

A MEDLEY OF CONSIDERED INDISCRETIONS

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OUR BETTERS.

A Medley of Considered Indiscretions

IT might easily be imagined that I intend to flatter the great, to admonish the little, to uphold the ethics of vested interests, and to make "Whatever is, is right" the burden of my essay.

I have no such intention. There is no more mischievous doctrine than that implied in the phrase "Our Betters" as commonly used. There is no more pitiable creed than that summed up in the old rhyme, spoken with fervour by thousands of lips, and sung in unison by thousands of hearts:

> "God bless the Squire and his relations,
> And keep us in our proper stations."

Gloss it over with good manners, or what we may, this fact remains: every man is to

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himself the most important thing on earth; and the first thing he requires is self-respect, that he may the better respect others.

The distinction which is born of self-respect is often met in the peasant—the man who is nearest to Nature. To create this sense is the first duty of the State. The care of the individual is the safeguard of the community: the assertion of the individual conscience over the conglomerate law of force is the triumph of free mind over the tyranny of matter.

The world is undergoing a sea-change; the old landmarks are being swept away, the barbed wire fences which separated the classes are being relegated to the limbo of the human scrap-heap. As in our time Science has progressed with giant strides—I mean the science appertaining to tangible things, the science of bodies—so I believe are we on the threshold of a spiritual science, the science of a higher sociology. Its premonitory vibrations are felt all over the world. Wherever we put our ears to the ground we hear a tiny tapping at the earth's crust: it is the upspringing of a new social creed; it is the call of a new religion; it is the intellectual enfranchisement of mankind.

Vaguely we all apprehend it, but we are slow to give it articulate utterance. I suppose that

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most of us when we are young—I mean those who think and feel—are by nature rebels. It is only in middle life that we learn to toe the line of expediency, the line of least resistance. We fall into step with those whom we call Our Betters —those who are in power. We are creatures of habit in mind as well as in body; and when we are old (some are born old) we cast aside the unworldly wisdom which our ethical instinct taught us, and put on the worldly wisdom of vested interests. We no longer think and feel for ourselves — we cease to be individuals, we are swallowed up in and become part of a system; we adopt the machine-made social laws of Our Betters. It is to our advantage. We are on the make. "Take what you can—give what you must" is the motto of the utilitarian.

This worldly wisdom is forced upon us in many ways: by the pinch of poverty, by the greater ease with which it enables us to climb the greasy pole of fame, by the avoidance of friction in our relations with our fellow men, and by that sympathetic and unconscious absorption of the prevailing ideas that surround us—the cult of Good Form. We are creatures of habit inwardly and outwardly.

On that symbol of respectability, the frock coat, we wear two buttons at the back, though why few of us know. A reverence for buttons

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is indeed one of the most curious attributes of our common humanity. In the same way we wear the habit of our minds ready made, buttons and all. Gentility is our watchword; we chorus the common hymn of respectability.

I remember Swinburne the poet telling me with a tinge of sadness of his own evolution. He and William Morris were friends in youth. "At that time," said he, "William Morris was a Tory of the bluest blood, while I was a red-hot Republican. Now," he sighed, "Morris addresses Socialist mobs in Trafalgar Square, and I write patriotic odes for the *St. James's Gazette*." That is the see-saw of life.

It seems to me that the rarest thing in humanity is independence of mind, the faculty of thinking and acting for oneself; the power to fulfil oneself at all costs.

To be oneself is the greatest luxury in the world, and I am bound to say it is the most expensive.

If we may regard tact as one of the minor virtues, let us not despise the valour of indiscretion, for to be indiscreet with discretion, to be gay without being flippant, to be serious without being earnest, is not this the philosophy of life?

It is this independence of mind which is my theme. It is easy to have the courage of other

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people's opinions; to have the courage of one's own instinct is the badge of the few. To be content to be in the minority in past times was to dwell in the shadow of palaces and in the shade of prisons.

But there is still injustice in the world; we have, thank Heaven, still the luxury of scorn. Out of our large scorn we weave our little epigrams!

> "The rain it raineth every day
> Upon the just and unjust fellow,
> But chiefly on the just, because
> The unjust has the just's umbrellow."

But the minority of to-day is often the majority of to-morrow, as the majority of to-day is often the minority of to-morrow! (Every truth has its paradox.)

Be on your guard always against the "compact Liberal majority" of which Ibsen speaks so eloquently in the mouth of that splendid but unfortunate altruist, Doctor Stockmann. The Doctor finds that the drains in his native town, which is a health resort, are polluting its waters, and he at once determines that the mischief must be made public, that a new system of drainage must be installed. But his brother, the burgomaster, a self-righteous and self-seeking person, denounces him for his wickedness. Would he ruin his native town? No; the scandal must be hushed up,

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the situation must be dealt with diplomatically. Doctor Stockmann sticks to his guns, holds a meeting, and is howled down, his windows are smashed, his trousers are torn, his practice is taken away from him. He addresses the meeting:

"Yes, by Heaven, I am going to revolt against the lie that truth belongs exclusively to the majority. What sort of truths do the majority rally round? Truths so stricken in years that they are sinking into decrepitude. When a truth is so old as that, gentlemen, it's in a fair way to become a lie. A normally constituted truth lives —let us say—as a rule, seventeen or eighteen years, at the outside twenty; very seldom more. All these majority truths are like last year's salt pork; they're like rancid, mouldy ham, producing all the moral scurvy that devastates society. . . . (*Interruptions.*) I'm keeping as closely to my text as I possibly can; for my text is precisely this—that the masses, the majority, this devil's own compact majority—it's that, I say, that's poisoning the sources of our spiritual life, and making a plague-spot of the ground beneath our feet. . . . ("*Shame! Shame!*") And now I'll make it clear to you all—and on scientific grounds, too—that the masses are nothing but the raw material that must be fashioned into a people. (*Interruptions.*) Is it not so with all other living creatures? I say it's absolutely unpardonable of

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the *People's Messenger* to proclaim, day out, day in, the false doctrine that it's the masses, the multitude, the compact majority, that monopolise liberality and morality—and that vice and corruption and all sorts of spiritual uncleanness ooze out of culture. No; it's stupidity, poverty, the ugliness of life, that do the devil's work! In a house that isn't aired and swept every day—in such a house, I say, within two or three years, people lose the power of thinking or acting morally. Lack of oxygen enervates the conscience. And there seems to be precious little oxygen in many and many a house in this town, since the whole compact majority is unscrupulous enough to want to found its future upon a quagmire of lies and fraud." [*The meeting breaks up in uproar.*]

In the last act, poor Doctor Stockmann, his soul a-blaze and his body a-bleed, finds that his independence has cost him his livelihood; his family is on the brink of starvation, and he cries out: "A man should never put on his best trousers when he goes out to battle for truth and freedom." With what a wonderful sense of impartiality does Ibsen hold the scales between the two brothers—the one the utilitarian, the other the idealist! The author sees the weak spot in the great man's armour. He sees also what is worldly-wise in the little man's argument. Great

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men have the defects of their qualities. Little men have the qualities of their defects, and they often triumph by their baseness. Their sword is flattery, blackmail is their armour.

From the purely worldly point of view Stockmann had the worst of it—for the time being. But let us hope that in an unwritten last act he got his reward. Of course, it may be said that this hot-headed hero might have gone about his reforming in a more discreet manner. He might have set out to inaugurate a reform movement from the various sections of society that would have profited by his indiscretion. First, he would have set up a rival company, and let in "at par" all those who would support his movement; the contract for putting in the new sanitary machinery would have been given to those who would vote solidly for his cause. He would have proclaimed that the pollution was directly traceable to a Conservative or Liberal source, choosing for his attack whichever party happened to be the more unpopular at the moment. He would have called a meeting of workmen and told them that the bloated councillors who ruled the town were endeavouring to keep the bread out of their mouths, that they were despoiling their potential widows and orphans. All these divergent interests he would have mashed together into a party, and he would have

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called his party the "Party of Purity." No doubt a statue would have been erected to him by his grateful fellow-citizens, and to its fund he himself would have sent the first contribution under the name of "Anonymous Admirer." But he lacked the virtue of tact. He was not one of those politicians whose blood and judgment are so well commingled that they will not allow their sense of right to interfere with their interests. Valour in the weak is always dangerous.

One should never hazard until one has cogged the dice of Fate. The native alcohol of a sanguine temperament is apt to lead one into strange quagmires.

A little mouse strayed into a wine cellar. Happening to step into a small puddle of whisky, he licked his paw. "H'm! rather nice that!" So he dipped in another paw; then all four paws; finally he lay down and rolled himself in the spirit, had a good lick all over, and felt most royally elated. Then, staggering to the head of the staircase, leaping up two steps at a time, he yelled out: "Where is that damned cat that chased me yesterday?"

It is only by combination that weak units make themselves strong. One of these days the mice may set up a trade union—and then? Well, I suppose they will have to hire a terrier to espouse their cause!

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However, my theme is not mice, but men. Union among men is one of the burning questions of the hour, and here I may allow myself the indiscretion of touching upon the great question of Trade Unionism, a question upon which I can speak with some little experience.

I suppose that every new movement, if successful, brings in its train a certain amount of tyranny. "In righting wrong, we sometimes wrong the right." The great struggle between Capital and Labour which is now going on is but the result of education. Education has placed a weapon in the hands of the democracy. It is a two-edged weapon, and its right use can only be taught by a yet greater, a higher education. Liberty gives birth to new tyrannies, and there can be no doubt that a certain amount of injustice must accompany all great reforms. So it is that the individual may for the time being suffer from the tyranny of Labour. But in the long run the individual will assert himself—the freedom of the individual to fulfil himself is the strength of the State. Each must be free to work out his own economic salvation. The liberty which cripples the efforts of the fittest is but another form of tyranny—the tyranny of the weak over the strong. We have the new liberty, for instance, which dictates compulsory closing on Thursdays,

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in order that we may have the vitality to rest from Saturday to Monday.

When I speak of a higher education, I do not mean the useless, outworn education which we wear as the superfluous buttons on our coat-tails, but an education which shall be largely philosophical, which shall teach the laws of health, of happiness, and of self-esteem of which modesty is the natural outcome—the kind of education that Marcus Aurelius suggested in his "Reflections."

I venture to think that much of the education we inherit from our forefathers is unsuitable to the conditions of the present time. In this higher education we must begin at the beginning; we must begin with the children. If children were taught a doggerel with a tune which should embody the simple laws of health, the rudimentary laws of happiness, they would never forget them all their lives; but these things are taken for granted. When they are young, boys are taught to look down upon other nations. They are taught to be jingoes. Were they taught in their infancy a world-patriotism, there would be fewer wars. I have no doubt that there has been of late years a great advance in this respect, but I remember a little incident that looms out of my first visit to America. It was at Chicago, and I was visiting at the house of

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highly cultured people. Their little boy of eight years old came in from his history lesson. "Are you an Englishman?" he asked. It was useless to deny it, for my accent betrayed me. "I am," I blurted. At this, he struck me with his little fist. "Well, take that," he said, "for upsetting the tea."

It is sad to think that we often learn too late by bitter experience what we might have learnt as children, when habits are quickly acquired.

Were we taught in our youth that happiness does not depend upon riches, nor honour upon honours, that our greatest pride should be to fulfil ourselves instead of aping "Our Betters," there would be less unhappiness in life. We learn wisdom only by our failures. Philosophy is a filly got by Common Sense out of Misfortune. How little wisdom, how little understanding of the real essentials of life, do we often find in those who grow prematurely old and cynical in the pursuit of a decorative but not always useful University career! Their point of view is narrowed; they have lost their individuality; they have imbibed from their "Betters" ideas of good form which they never shake off; they have lost their power to "do."

Take, for instance, the son of a manufacturer who by his own effort has built up a great business. The father sends his son to the University,

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as "Our Betters" do. What often happens is that the son returns to his home unfitted to carry on the work which his father's energy initiated. And what has he got in return? The right to wear a coloured ribbon round his straw hat! Those precious years between eighteen and twenty-four have been wasted—those precious years in which he should have passed many a milestone on the road of life. He emerges from the University barren of initiative; he is no longer an individual; he is but a devotee of good form. The factory over which he should have presided is run by a salaried manager; the foreigner outstrips him in the competition; he has not the pride in that which his father made, in that which made his father. He is a victim to "Our Betters." But he has become a gentleman.

And what is a gentleman? A gentleman is one who does not care a button whether he is one or not. It has always seemed to me that the greatest men I have met in life have been distinguished by a simplicity and a naturalness, the counterpart of which one only finds in peasants.

I remember the thing which struck me most when I first visited the House of Lords was the extraordinarily careless manner in which the peers were attired. They appeared to be a

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procession of savants and market gardeners, with a sprinkling of "bucks." The late Lord Salisbury looked like a Viking who had casually strayed into Conduit Street. By the by, it is recorded of that great statesman that on one State occasion he wore the Order of the Garter on the wrong shoulder—a truly lovable touch in a great man. But, of course, we cannot become great by wearing our garters on the wrong leg, any more than we can become geniuses by brushing our hats the wrong way.

How easy it is to be a genius until one has done something! Everybody is a potential genius until he has tried to do something in the world. Woe be to him who does something, for to be understood is to be found out.

As soon as you have done something the noble army of log-rollers who were at your back will be facing you, fiery pen in hand—and then, what an awakening! The process of acquiring a swelled head is a most fascinating and pleasant state. It is only the subsequent shrinkage which hurts. I know these little coteries. I am acquainted with their jargon. They, too, have their little protective trade unions which seek by their intrigues to "down the tools" of the workman who "does." To be peculiar, to be original, is the vain endeavour of their existence. This striving after originality is the greatest con-

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vention in the world. The really strong man is unconscious of his originality; he does what he does because he must. We only do well what we cannot help doing.

The other day I found myself in the Paris Salon looking upon the display of Post-Impressionist or Futurist and Cubist pictures.

I am only too ready to appreciate any new phase of Art, so long as it is "truly new" or "newly true"; but I am bound to say that this latest development of the new art seems to me frankly insincere where it is not obviously unhealthy.

After a time I turned from the pictures to watch the faces of the spectators, and while in some cases the look was that of humorous tolerance, it was mostly one of set bewilderment. The public went about silently, as though wandering among the inmates of a madhouse. The word of critical wisdom was, of course, uttered by a child. A boy of seven years old stood before a picture and, clapping his hands, turned to his mother and said, "Oh, mamma, I have never seen a green dog before!"

In referring as I did to a University education, do not imagine that I undervalue the tremendous importance of such intellectual training as our Universities afford to all those who

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intend to follow learned professions, to whom indeed the academic study during these years is absolutely essential; but I imagine that there are many callings to which the lengthy sojourn in a University is absolutely disadvantageous, and that the acquisition of a mere social betterment is frequently ruinous to the initiative of those concerned.

You may be sure that when you hear the same complaint uttered by so many independent persons, in so many sections of the community, there is something wrong in the system, and that a revolution is at hand. It is another case of too much reverence for buttons.

The great book from which to learn is the book of life; the great university is the storm and stress of the world. A man's education should depend on his individual job. A sailor, for instance, is none the worse for not having a University education: there is no class of men that is more keenly intelligent in grappling with the essentials of life than are sailors. Why? Because they are in touch with Nature. They have to deal with the elements; they are eye to eye with the realities of Nature, and consequently they are more indifferent than most to the little socialities which vex the souls of those whose surroundings are more artificial. How little all these little social bickerings seem when we are in

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touch with Nature! How infinitely ridiculous do these petty distinctions become when we look at the stars!

We often bear a great tragedy, a great sorrow, more calmly than we do the minor annoyances of life—fleas are more disconcerting than elephants. A friend of mine told me that whenever he was sorely troubled about a loss on the Stock Exchange or the non-attainment of a peerage, he threw open his window, walked out into the garden, looked at the stars, and laughed—lit his pipe—and was at peace with the world. So the late Lord Tennyson, when staying at a country house where the neighbouring luminaries of the county had been invited to meet him, was asked by his host after dinner whether he would like to look at the stars. The great poet took up the telescope, and, forgetting himself and others, gazed for twenty minutes at the wonders of the heavens. "Well, what do you think, Mr. Tennyson?" inquired his host. "I don't think much of our county families," replied Tennyson. In moments such as these, when we contemplate the vast solemnities of creation, the sociological amenities of life are apt to take their due perspective.

There are many kinds of snobbery—there is the snobbery of riches; there is the snobbery of

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power, the snobbery of aristocracy (though I am bound to say that so far as my observation goes the class which is least tainted with this failing is the aristocracy). There is the snobbery of Socialism, there is the snobbery of dogma, and there is the snobbery of culture—the snobbery of what Americans call the "high-brows"—perhaps the most fearsome snobbery of all. Alas! not all people who are gifted with intellect have the saving grace of intelligence; they lack that tolerance which is characteristic of all great and noble minds. Kindness is the crowning triumph. There is nothing meaner than the contempt of the greatly endowed for those less favoured than themselves. There is nothing finer than modesty in the great, for that modesty implies a divine humour.

There is one direction in which it seems to me the imitation of Our Betters is most lamentable, and that is in the pronunciation of the English language. And here, of course, the Stage can fulfil a useful mission in preserving the vigour and the breadth of Shakespeare's tongue; indeed, it is difficult to be lackadaisical in speaking his virile verse.

Let us consider the way the language is spoken by the poorer classes. The Cockney accent has had many vicissitudes; it has undergone great changes in our time. Take the case of Dickens.

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Our Betters

We know that Mr. Weller was very shaky as to his w's: "Spell it with a 'wee,' Sammy." This particular vulgarism has quite gone out of abuse.

The dropping of the "h" will no doubt be a thing of the past in the next generation, as it is regarded as vulgar in the present. Again, the dropping of the "g" is a vulgarity in persons of the lower classes, as it is a sign of smartness in Our Betters.

The preservation of the strength of the English language is indeed all-important. The very latest Cockney accent is what I may call of the order "genteel." The vowels are squeezed almost out of recognition. "Home" becomes "höme"; "time" becomes "taime"; "town" becomes "teown"; "girl" becomes "giairl." It seems to me that the children are taught in the schools this terrible jargon of gentility, to which the vigorous vulgarity of the early Victorian Cockney was infinitely preferable. The imitation of Our Betters is once more to be deprecated. There is nothing so terrible as "refainement."

Every man should have a pride in the particular work to which he is called. Instead of thinking only of the reward which that work brings him, every workman should learn to love and to take a pride in his craft; it should be to him even

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more important than football. I do not mean the mere laying of bricks—that will soon be done by machinery; I mean that work into which he can put himself, his own being, his own skill; and there are hundreds of these crafts. The painter feels this pride—Raphael and Rembrandt, Joshua Reynolds and Watts felt it. The great architects of the world feel it. The sculptor's hand moves to it. Benvenuto Cellini—his work was himself, his better self. Even so does the good gardener feel a pride in his garden; he, again, is near to Nature. The maker of wall-papers, the weaver of silks, the inventor of subtle machinery, the drawer on wood and brass, the driver of a motor-car, should share this pride of handiwork. All these things can be made to have a value beyond the mere wages they bring. There is the joy of the workman in his work.

And every man to-day can participate in the beauty of art; he has his place in the Sun of the intellectual world. A shilling will buy him a Shakespeare. Throughout the country nowadays the working classes have access to the art treasures owned by the rich who are willing to share them with their fellow men.

I have expressed the opinion that education brings certain dangers in its train which have to be counteracted by a yet higher education. So

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also have the efforts of Science in her battles with Nature to be eked out by a yet deeper science. Take the most recent scientific development—that of Eugenics. In former days Nature killed off the weaklings in the most drastic and practical manner by consumption and by various diseases; man had to stand the test put upon him by the assaults of an army of unseen and unknown microbes; the unfit were rooted out by the brutal laws of Nature—only the strong survived. To-day when Nature says to Man, "Thou shalt die," Science steps in and says, "No, thou mayest live." Then comes Nature's retort, "If thou causest the unfit to survive, then I will afflict their offspring with infirmity even to the third and fourth generation." To which Science replies, "Very well, Nature, we will strike a compromise—I will see that the weakly shall not be born into this world." And there we stand at present—hesitant as to how to carry out our side of the contract. Science is once more Nature's slave.

It is always hazardous to beat one's head against the brick wall of Nature, for it is apt to bleed—the head, I mean. I suppose it is but logic that if the lower forms of animals prosper by scientific selection, so must Man, the highest development of animal life, be subject to betterment by such a process.

Of all the movements which are in progress for

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the development of the race, I imagine that none is capable of such far-reaching results to the health, the *moral*, and the sane patriotism of the inhabitants of these islands as is the Boy Scout movement. And this development seems to me to tend more than any other to do away with class distinctions. In countries where universal service prevails every man who serves in the ranks for his country feels himself the equal of him who is his comrade in arms. The handling of a musket is a great leveller of mankind—in more senses than one. See these manly little fellows as they trudge along the roads—how picturesque they look, how businesslike! Contrast them with the slouching boys who are attired in the ordinary trousers, shell-jacket, and top-hatted garb of the public school. Surely a survival of the ugliest costume the world has ever invented! I imagine, too, that the spirit of independence which is part of the training of the Boy Scout will be a factor of enormous importance in the generations which are growing into manhood. The handy-man is always to the fore when it comes to the test. How much more profitable than to sit at a football match watching great big athletes kicking a ball when it is down! And the comradeship of the Boy Scouts inculcates good fellowship and good humour—very necessary qualities to enable us to bear the tragedies of life which come to every

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man; and if we learn to "rough it" on the road of Life with our fellows, we are often able to lighten a friend of half his burden by counter-weighting it with sympathy. Of what inestimable value, too, is a knowledge of First Aid! How useful is such knowledge in every walk of life! Only the other day I became personally acquainted with its value. A motor-car had run into a wall, close to my home in the country; the inmate of the car was bleeding to death. Had any of the three bystanders known the rudiments of First Aid, he would have been able to stanch the discharge from the artery, and so saved another's life. Let us not despise the handy-man.

It may be argued that the Boy Scout movement may have a tendency to make the nation militant at a time when the higher ideals of humanity are asserting themselves. Quite so. But Wisdom may be found at either extreme of a line—make a circle of the line and the two points meet. Universal disarmament is the ideal for which every right-minded person strives. I suppose no one has a greater horror of war than that great soldier who has been calling aloud and eloquently for universal service—I mean Lord Roberts. But we can only deal with facts as we find them in our generation. We believe that the most civilising factor for mankind is the supremacy of the Anglo-Saxon race—the defence

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of that supremacy is therefore the business of Great Britain. Foreign nations may claim, and claim with reason, that England took her colonies by force. The past history of the world has been to take what one wants and trust to one's luck and one's power to keep it. This is the peculiar faculty of the English people.

I once heard of an Englishman who, in spite of a total ignorance of foreign languages, when travelling abroad always contrived to get what he wanted by a very simple expedient. He had just returned from a visit to Germany. "How did you manage to get on?" asked a friend. "Famously," he replied. "But you don't know one word of German," said the other. "I only know one word of German, and that's French: *Pardong*. Whenever I want to go anywhere, or to obtain anything, I simply say '*Pardong*.' No one can say me nay, for I shouldn't understand their language. So I help myself."

Self-help is the first law of possession. If one wants anything done one should always do it oneself—it saves so much waste of time in blaming others if things go wrong. Take what you want, but take it gracefully—then apologise for having it, but keep it all the same, and then put a sentry over it. This has answered very well in our colonial policy. But the reason why England has kept her colonies is that she has

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not only the genius of "give and take"; she has the yet greater genius of "take and give"—the genius of a sympathetic understanding of alien races. Her tyranny is tempered by humanity.

A general disarmament is the ideal towards which humanity is striving all over the world. But pride and prejudice and greed are still mighty forces, and it is only by the spread of the higher education that the spiritual development of mankind can be ensured by the adoption of Christ's doctrines, which, alas! go to the wall in all Christian countries at the bidding of expediency. Blood is thicker than water, but gold is thicker than blood. As Shakespeare is the most modern of writers, so is Christ the most modern of Reformers; indeed, He is a little in advance of our time; His principles are still taboo, and if uttered by a modern statesman would be denounced as "bad form." Is not every reformer regarded as "no gentleman" until his propaganda has become the law of the land?

I knew a multi-millionaire who, having been baptised late in life, forsook Christianity. We had been having a somewhat heated discussion on social questions. We were in a picture gallery, and suddenly stood before a great picture of Christ. "Socialist!" the multi-millionaire cried as he left the building.

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But to whatever shade of political opinion we may belong, we must all recognise the terrible danger which lurks in the transference of power from Kings to the People, for if the tyranny of Kings and Priests be undesirable, the tyranny of the half-educated mob is yet more terrible. Beware of the tyranny of the great, but beware far more of the chaos of ignorance. We are in a period of transition, and out of the very danger of giving power to the people may arise the universal peace. As Science is teaching us the use of the newly discovered forces of electricity and radium, which, ignorantly used, are infernal agents of destruction, so may the right use of democratic power be the most splendid agency for good when the peoples shall have been instructed in its right use. Thus enlightened, the people may draw closer the bonds of the Brotherhood of Man; and, guided by the new light and restrained by the higher education, is it not possible that the workmen of the world will join in a bloodless revolution and cry, "We will have no more wars"?

War is not the only business of man. There are other heroisms than those of the sword and the submarine. Who has not—if he have an imagination to understand and a heart to feel—who has not shuddered in reading of the terrors of this latest war in the East? Who has not been filled with noble hatred of the wiles of

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politicians, of the cupidity of potentates, and of the stupidity of peoples? In contemplating from afar the terrible sufferings entailed by a single campaign, whose gorge has not risen with indignation at the brutalities, the tortures, the agonies, the rapine of which our brothers and sisters are the victims, on those blood-soaked, pestilential plains?

We often hear it said that war is a necessary evil, that war keeps the race strong, that war will not cease while human nature lasts. But is this so? What about the Jews, who are perhaps the most dominant race in the world to-day? Have they needed wars to keep them strong? Have their domestic virtues needed the stimulus of bloodshed? Have their acquisitive vices needed it? Has the flower of the Jewish race been destroyed on the battlefield? The Jews have devoted themselves for many centuries to commerce and to the arts of peace. Certainly we artists have reason to be grateful to the Jews; for I dread to think what would become of the art of this country were it not for the encouragement and support it receives at the hands of the Jewish community.

We have looked upon the wonderful strides which Science has made in the past fifty years—it may be that in the next half-century mankind will see a revolution which shall bring another

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happiness, the happiness which is derived from the exercise of the most humanising of all the influences—I mean that which is bestowed by Art.

Is it not possible that the gentle tapping at the earth's crust may find an echo in the hearts of the peoples of the earth, who will arise in the might of a new-born religion and will knock at the gates of the world's conscience, singing in unison the hymn of humanity, and crying, "Thou shalt do no murder—even for the divine right of kings"; when frontiers shall be swept away and there shall be one brotherhood of man, one flag, one language, and one religion, the religion of Humanity; when the people shall be generalled by the dreamers, the poets, the philosophers, the seers and singers, the artists of the world? It is men like Christ, Sophocles, Dante, Shakespeare, Cervantes, and Goethe rather than the heroic slaughterers of history who have the abiding influence in the advancement of mankind.

The sum of a man's greatness should be measured, not by his destructive activity, but by the constructive good he does for the world. What is his output of good? That is the question. What is the sum of Napoleon's achievement? I am inclined to think that his most useful contribution to the happiness of mankind was the constitution

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he gave to the Comédie Française in the Code Napoleon.

Has not the highest morality been defined as that which will bring the greatest happiness to the greatest number? And happiness depends not on wealth, not on environing luxuries; it is rather a condition of mind; it is the power to enjoy. This gift is bestowed on one and the same person with an almost equal proportion as is the power to suffer. One child will be happy with a rag doll; another will be dissatisfied with the most perfect mechanical toy—because it does not have a real stomach-ache when it is pinched. Contentment is the state of being that we should cultivate, for it is cultivatable; it is irrigable with the aid of humour. It is a habit of mind which is due largely no doubt to a blessed heredity, but is also capable of being acquired by training and by careful fostering.

Happiness does not depend on possessions. Imagination can do much. It is, of course, fine to have good things to eat and drink; but I had for friend a gentle philosopher who told me that when he was poor he was content with a piece of bread and cheese and a glass of beer for dinner, during which he would revel in the imaginative delights of a cookery book! The rich man has not a monopoly of happiness. "Poor and content is rich and rich enough; but riches fineless is as

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poor as winter to him that ever fears he shall be poor."

Goethe beautifully sums up this philosophy in his poem of "The Eagle and the Dove." An eagle is wounded, and with his broken wing he drags along a miserable existence by the side of a brook, on the other side of which is a dove, who in perfect safety exchanges views on life with her carnivorous *vis-à-vis*. The eagle complains of his lot. To this the dove replies:

"'Be of good cheer, my friend!
All that is needed for calm happiness
Hast thou not here?
Hast thou not pleasure in the golden bough
That shields thee from the day's fierce glow?
Canst thou not raise thy breast to catch,
On the soft moss beside the brook,
The sun's last rays at even?
Here thou mayst wander through the flowers' fresh dew,
Pluck from the forest-trees
The choicest food—mayst quench
Thy light thirst at the silvery spring—
Oh, friend, true happiness
Lies in content,
And sweet content
Finds everywhere enough.'
'Oh, wise one!' said the eagle, while he sank
In deep and ever deep'ning thought—
'Oh! wisdom! thou speakest like a dove.'"

I have no doubt that everything I have said

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has been better said by someone else. One of the very few authors with whom I have a skipping acquaintance is Emerson. In one of his essays occurs the following passage:

"I know that for myself it makes no difference whether I do or forbear those actions which are reckoned excellent. I cannot consent to pay for a privilege where I have intrinsic right. Few and mean as my gifts may be, I actually am, and do not need for my assurance or the assurance of my fellows any secondary testimony. What must I do is all that concerns me, not what the people think. This rule, equally arduous in actual and in intellectual life, may serve for the whole distinction between greatness and meanness. It is the harder, because you will always find those who think they know what is your duty better than you know it. It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after your own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude."

That indeed is a great capacity—to keep the aloofness of one's soul through all the sordidness of life, amid the hustle and bustle, the bang and clang, the game and the fame, the jobbery and snobbery, of everyday existence; to retain, in fact, the mind of a child, and so keep the illusions of fairyland, even after our fairyland has faded as a mirage of childhood.

Yes; to keep one's illusions, to keep with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude,

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that is a great achievement; for our respect for others is in proportion to our respect for ourselves—and to be true to himself, that is man's best endeavour; for, as Shakespeare says (and he says everything that can be said on any conceivable subject better than any other could say it), "To thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man."

AFTER-THOUGHT

If in the foregoing excursions I have given utterance to an occasional truth, as the blind hen picks up a corn, I can only plead that they were written when wandering alone under the pine-trees, pondering some problems of life; and the scent of the pine-trees had got into my brain. I listened to what they said, and took it down in shorthand. And the message that their boughs whispered to me was this:

The best thing a man can do is to be himself, in spite of all inconveniences; and in his little walk through life to tell the truth according to himself; to be afraid of no man but himself;

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to respect the laws but not to cringe to them; to be himself in spite of the opinion of the multitude, and to acknowledge no higher Court of Appeal than that of his own conscience; for he who can look unflinchingly in the mirror of his soul laughs when his effigy is burnt in the market place.

"Is that so?" I asked.

And the pine-trees murmured, "Yes, our only Betters are Ourselves."

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THE LIVING SHAKESPEARE

A DEFENCE OF MODERN TASTE

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THE LIVING SHAKESPEARE

ABUSE of the public is the last ditch of the disappointed.

"Sir," said Dr. Johnson, "I have not even mentioned 'little Davy' in the preface to my Shakespeare."

"Why?" ventured Boswell. "Do you not admire that great actor?"

"Yes," replied the Doctor, "as a poor player who frets and struts his hour upon the stage—as a shadow."

"But," persisted Boswell, "has he not brought Shakespeare into notice?"

At this the immortal lexicographer fired up. "Sir, to allow that would be to lampoon the age.

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Many of Shakespeare's plays are the worse for being acted."

Then Boswell, Scotsman that he was, once more replied with a question: "What! is nothing gained by *acting and decoration?*"

"Sir!" replied Dr. Johnson, breathing hard; "Sir!" he thundered, as he brought down his fist with all the energy of his rotund and volcanic personality; "Sir!"—and for once there was a silence—the only silence that is recorded in the life of that great positivist.

In that brief conversation is raised the chief question which has divided lovers of Shakespeare for three centuries past. Ought his works to be presented upon the stage at all?

Strange as it may seem in an actor, I am bound to say that I can understand this attitude of mind, which was shared by many thinkers of past ages. I am not astonished even that such acute and genial critics as Charles Lamb and Wordsworth, that such serious lovers of Shakespeare as Hazlitt and Emerson, held the opinion that the works of our greatest dramatist should not be seen upon the stage. Be that as it may, it is not my intention to enter into an academic discussion with these departed spirits. Rather will it be my practical endeavour to show that the public of to-day demands that, if acted at all, Shakespeare shall

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be presented with all the resources of the theatre of our time—that he shall be treated, not as a dead author speaking a dead language, but as a living force speaking with the voice of a living humanity. And it will be my further endeavour to show that in making this demand the public is right.

I am quite aware that in this assertion I am opposed by those who regard Shakespeare as a mere literary legacy, and themselves as his executors, for whose special behest his bones are periodically exhumed in order to gratify a pretty taste for literary pedantry. But great poetry is not written for the Few, elected of themselves; it must be a living force, or it must be respectfully relegated to the dingy shelves of the great unheard—the little read.

Is Shakespeare living, or is he dead? That is the question. Is he to be, or not to be?

If he is to be, his being must be of our time—that is to say, we must look at him with the eyes and we must listen to him with the ears of our own generation. And it is surely the greatest tribute to his genius that we should claim his work as belonging no less to our time than to his own!

There are those who contend that, if Shakespeare be fit to play to our age, in order to

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appreciate his works they must only be decked out with the threadbare wardrobe of a bygone time. Let us treat these antiquarians with the respect due to another age, but do not let us be deluded by a too diligent study of magazine articles into the belief that we must regard these great plays as interesting specimens for the special delectation of epicures in antiques.

We have, then, in fact, two contending forces of opinion: on the one side we have the literary experts, as revealed in print; on the other we have public opinion, as revealed by the coin of the realm.

Before I enter upon my justification of the public taste, I shall have to show what the public taste is. Now, there is only one way of arriving at an estimate of the public taste in "things theatric," and that is through the practical experience of those whose business it is to cater for the public. The few experts who arrogate to themselves the right to dictate what the public taste should be are exactly those who ignore what it really is. To their more alluring speculations I shall turn later on; and if, in passing over the ground which has been trodden by these erudite but uninformed writers, I have now and then to sweep aside the cobwebs woven of their fancy, I shall hope to do so with a light hand, serene in the assurance that good

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and strenuous work will survive the condemnation of a footnote.

Much has been written of late as to the manner in which the plays of Shakespeare should be presented. We are told in this connection that the ideal note to strike is that of "Adequacy." We are assured that we are not to apply to Shakespearian productions the same care, the same reverence for accuracy, the same regard for stage illusion, for mounting, scenery, and costume, which we devote to authors of lesser degree; that we should not, in fact, avail ourselves of those adjuncts which in these days science and art place at the manager's right hand; in other words, that we are to produce our national poet's works without the crowds and armies, without the pride, pomp, and circumstance which are suggested in every page of the dramatist's work, and the absence of which Shakespeare himself so frequently laments in his plays. On this subject—rightly or wrongly —(but I hope I shall be able to prove to you rightly) the public has spoken with no hesitating voice; the trend of its taste has undoubtedly been towards putting Shakespeare upon the stage as worthily and as munificently as the manager can afford.

It would be interesting to ascertain how many English playgoers have encouraged this method of producing Shakespeare since Sir Squire Bancroft

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gave us *The Merchant of Venice* at the old Prince of Wales' Theatre, which is my earliest theatrical recollection of the kind; and I do not remember since to have seen any Shakespearian presentation more satisfying to my judgment. It was here that Ellen Terry first shed the sunlight of her buoyant and radiant personality on the character of Portia; it was the first production in which the modern spirit of stage-management asserted itself, transporting us as it did into the atmosphere of Venice, into the rarefied realms of Shakespearian comedy. Since then, no doubt, millions have flocked to this class of production, as we realise when we recall Sir Henry Irving's beautiful Shakespearian presentations from 1874 to 1896; presentations which included *Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello, Much Ado About Nothing, King Lear, Romeo and Juliet, The Merchant of Venice, Henry VIII., Richard III.*, and *Cymbeline;* and when we remember Miss Mary Anderson's memorable production of *A Winter's Tale* at the same theatre, where the Leontes was Mr. Forbes Robertson, another actor of the modern school (that old school which is eternally new—I might say the right school), not to mention Mr. John Hare's *As You Like It*, Mr. Wilson Barrett's *Hamlet* and *Othello*, and Mr. George Alexander's *As You Like It* and *Much Ado About Nothing*. Again, at the Haymarket, under a recent management, one might

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have seen produced in this same culpable fashion *Hamlet*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and *Henry IV.*

Now, I am not in a position, by means of the brutal but unanswerable logic of figures, to speak of the success which attended the various productions of my brother managers: nor shall I seek to set up commercial success as the standard by which artistic endeavour must be gauged. But I do know that, by the public favour, many of the managers whom I have mentioned succeeded in keeping in the bills for a number of months their great Shakespearian productions, and I believe that in the aggregate these brought them ample and substantial reward. That we should look for that sluttishness of prosperity which attends entertainments of another order is, of course, out of the question; but the privilege of presenting the masterpieces of Shakespeare's genius is surely as great as that derived from paying a dividend of 85 per cent. to a set of shareholders in a limited liability company. But if I am unable to speak with authority as to the success or otherwise which has attended the productions at other theatres, I can speak with authority in reference to those productions for which I myself have been responsible—if, indeed, it be permissible to call oneself as a witness to prove one's own case. For the moment modesty

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must give way to the exigencies of the situation—as modesty frequently must.

In three years at Her Majesty's Theatre three Shakespearian productions have been given—*Julius Cæsar*, *King John*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; and much, no doubt, as it will shock some people, I am not ashamed to say that for these productions I have tried to borrow from the arts and the sciences all that the arts and the sciences had to lend. And what has been the result? In London alone two hundred and forty-two thousand people witnessed *Julius Cæsar*, over one hundred and seventy thousand came to see *King John*, and nearly two hundred and twenty thousand were present during the run of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—in all a grand total of six hundred and thirty-two thousand visitors to these three productions. And no doubt my brother managers who have catered for the public in this manner could, with the great successes that they have had, point to similar figures. I think, therefore, it is not too much to claim that the public taste clearly and undoubtedly—whether that taste be good or bad—lies in the direction of the method in which Shakespeare has been presented of late years by the chief metropolitan managers. It is for me to prove that that taste is justified, and that the great mass of English theatre-goers are not to be stamped as fools and ignorants because

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they have shown a decided preference for contemporary methods.

I have endeavoured to show what the public taste of to-day is. Before entering upon its defence, I shall put before you the case for the prosecution. Many able pens have been busy of late, and much valuable ink has been spilt in assuring us that the modern method is a wrong method, and that Shakespeare can only be rescued from the sloth into which he has fallen by a return to that primitive treatment which may be indicated in such stage instructions as "This is a forest," "This is a wall," "This is a youth," "This is a maiden," "This is a moon."

The first count in the indictment, according to one distinguished writer, is that it is the modern manager's "avowed intention to appeal to the spectator mainly through the eye." If that be so, then the manager is clearly at fault—but I am unacquainted with that manager. We are told that the manager nowadays will only produce those plays of Shakespeare which lend themselves to "ostentatious spectacle." If that be so, then the manager is clearly at fault—but I am still unacquainted with him. We are assured on the authority of this same writer, who I am sure would be incapable of deliberately arguing from false premisses, that "in the most influential circles of

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the theatrical profession it has become a commonplace to assert that Shakespearian drama cannot be successfully produced on the stage—cannot be rendered tolerable to any large section of the play-going public—without a plethora of scenic spectacle and gorgeous costumes which the student regards as superfluous and inappropriate." If it be so, the unknown manager is once more at fault. We may, indeed, take him to be a vulgar rogue who produces Shakespeare for the sole purpose of gain, and who does not hesitate to debauch the public taste in order to compass his sordid ends.

We are told that under the present system it is no longer possible for Shakespeare's plays to be acted constantly and in their variety owing to the large sums of money which have to be expended, thus necessitating long runs. Of course, if a large number of Shakespeare's plays could follow each other without intermission, a very desirable state of things would be attained; but my contention is that no company of ordinary dimensions could possibly achieve this, either worthily or even satisfactorily. Leaving out of consideration for the moment all such questions as rehearsals of scenery and effects, it is impossible for one set of actors properly to prepare one play in the space of a few days while they are playing another at night. Those who have had any experience of rehearsing a Shakespearian drama in a serious way

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will bear me out that a week or a fortnight, or even a month, is insufficient to do the text anything like full justice. And even when attempts of this kind have been made, can it honestly be said that they have left any lasting impression upon the mind or the fancy? I contend that greater service for the true knowing of Shakespeare's works is rendered by the careful production of *one* of these plays than by the indifferent —or, as I believe it is now fashionably called, the "adequate"—representation of half a dozen of them. By deeply impressing an audience, and making their hearts throb to the beat of the poet's wand, by bringing out through representation the full meaning of his works, by enthralling an audience by the magic of the actor who has the compelling power, we are enabled to give Shakespeare a wider appeal and a larger franchise—surely no mean achievement! Thousands witness him instead of hundreds; for his works are not only, or primarily, for the literary student: they are for the world at large. Indeed, there should be more joy over ninety-nine Philistines that are gained than over one elect that is preserved. I contend that not only is no service rendered to Shakespeare by an "adequate" representation, but that such performances are a disservice, in so far that a large proportion of the audience will receive from such representations an impression of

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dullness. And in all modesty it may be claimed that it is better to draw multitudes by doing Shakespeare in the way the public prefers than to keep the theatre empty by only presenting him "adequately," as these counsels of imperfection would have us do.

Our detractors miss two basic points. There is no proof that Shakespeare did not run a new play as long as it held the town—everything points to the contrary. And if Shakespeare "adequate" appealed to the public more than Shakespeare splendid, we who produce him would find it to our immense advantage and profit so to do.

I take it that the proper function of putting Shakespeare upon the stage is not only to provide an evening's amusement at the theatre, but also to give a stimulus to the further study of our great poet's works. If performances, therefore, make but a fleeting impression during the moments that they are in action, and are forgotten as soon as the playhouse is quitted, the stimulus for diving deeper into other plays than those that we have witnessed must inevitably be wanting. For my own part, I admit that the long run has its disadvantages—that it tends (unless fought against) to automatic acting and to a lessening of enthusiasm, passion, and imagination on the part of the actor; but what system is perfect? It is a regrettable fact that in all the affairs of life, when-

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ever we strive for an abstract condition of things, we are apt to come into collision with the concrete wall which is built of human limitations—as many an idealist's battered head will testify. In making a choice, one can only elect that system which has the smallest number of drawbacks to its account.

The argument that the liabilities involved nowadays in producing a Shakespearian play on the modern system are so heavy that few managers care to face them, and that therefore, unless a change in such system take place, Shakespeare will be banished from the London stage altogether —is in my opinion a fallacious one. Again I apologise for intruding the results of my own experience, but I feel bound to state—if only for the purpose of encouraging others to put Shakespeare on the stage as bountifully as they can afford—that no single one of my Shakespearian productions has been unattended by a substantial pecuniary reward.

I now come to deal with two charges which practically come under one head—the impeachment of the actor-manager. He is represented as being capable of every enormity, of every shameless infraction of every rule of dramatic art, provided only that he stands out from his fellows and obtains the giant share of notice and applause. These two charges are: first, that the text is

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ruthlessly cut in order to give an unwarranted predominance to certain parts; and secondly, that the parts are not entrusted to actors capable of doing them justice. If these charges be true, the practice is a most reprehensible one. But are they true? Is it not rather the fact that the old star system has of late given way to all-round casts of a high level? I think the public taste and the practice of managers has been in this direction—a welcome change which has taken place during recent years. In regard to this cutting of the text, it is only fair to point out that the process to an extent is necessary in the present day. It would be impossible otherwise to bring most of Shakespeare's plays within the three-hours' limit which he himself has described as the proper traffic of the stage. In times gone by when there was practically no scenery at all, when the public were satisfied to come to the playhouse and remain in their seats without moving from the beginning to the end of the performance (taking solid and liquid refreshment when it pleased them), a much lengthier play was possible than in these days; but to perform any single one of Shakespeare's plays without excision at all would be to court failure instead of success. To play, for example, the whole of *Hamlet* or *Antony and Cleopatra*—the two longest of Shakespeare's works—without a cut would mean a stay of about five hours in the

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theatre. This would never be tolerated in these days, and the result of such a practice would be to empty the theatre instead of to fill it. Modern conditions of life obviously do not admit of such a system. Dinner is so necessary—nowadays! Moreover, Shakespeare himself did not represent the entire play of *Hamlet*, which was subjected to judicious cuts in his own time—and there is nothing to show that his dramas were ever performed in their printed entirety. Take, for example, *Antony and Cleopatra*. We have no evidence that it was ever played in Shakespeare's own time; but, if it were, the loose construction of Act III., involving as it does the necessity of no fewer than eleven changes of scene, could hardly have fulfilled the ideal dramatic requirements even of those days.

Now as to the constitution of the Shakespearian casts of the present day, it is asserted that the parts are not entrusted to the right exponents. With all respect, I submit that the public has the right to choose its own favourites, and surely the manager has the right to select his own company from the ranks of these favourites, rather than from the ranks of those whose practice, however useful, has been limited to the range of Shakespearian drama, and who have not yet gained their spurs in the wider field of our arduous calling; for the more varied his experience, the better equipped is the actor for the presentation of the

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essentially human characters of Shakespeare. If we follow the argument to the end, we are led to the conclusion that it is more satisfying to see the young lady who has but three years been emancipated from the high school, playing Ophelia and Lady Macbeth, Beatrice, Viola and Rosalind, than Miss Ellen Terry, Miss Mary Anderson, Miss Julia Neilson, and other actresses of their proved talents and experience. I venture to think that the public is once more right. What is this clamour about the modern cast? Not to cite more modern instances, let us take the cast of *Henry VIII.* at the Lyceum. Henry Irving as Wolsey, William Terriss as the King, Arthur Stirling as Cranmer, Forbes Robertson as Buckingham, Alfred Bishop as the Chamberlain, Ellen Terry as Queen Katharine, Mrs. Arthur Bourchier as Anne Boleyn, and Miss Le Thière as the Old Dame. How should we better this?

That the chief parts in most Shakespearian productions are given to star artists is not only the fault of the manager—the chief culprit was himself an author-actor-manager. He wrote great parts, and great parts require great actors. Shakespeare and Adequacy! What a combination! Adequacy! The word seems to me almost blasphemous in such a connection. For all the ills to which dramatic flesh is heir the actor-manager is held responsible: he is the evil genius of the

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theatre; a make-up of vanity, ignorance, and despotism; a kind of Bottom the Weaver without his wit. I can picture him, having condescended to give up an hour or two of his leisured life to the careless pastime of a rehearsal, standing in the centre of the stage, clad in costly furs, holding in one hand an *édition de luxe* of Shakespeare (without notes), wielding in the other a tyrannical sceptre in the shape of a blue pencil, while by flashes of limelight he mutilates, with a fiendish, almost ghoulish, joy on his face, all that portion of the text which he cannot with any show of ingenuity commandeer to his own part. I can see him waving a recently manicured hand, flashing with precious gems, in lofty deprecation of honest merit gibbering in a corner. I can imagine him, leaving the half-finished rehearsal, bent on some errand of gluttony, and oozing through the stage door, the decadent odour of his scented curls hitting the nostrils of the virtuous commentator to whose muttered footnote he turns a deaf ear; I can see him carelessly fling a handful of superfluous gold to a group of satellites who raise a hireling cheer as he leaps into his triumphal auto-motor car, wherein, juggernauting with the relentless revolutions of its gilded wheels, the prostrate figures of Literature, Art, and Science, he is puffed away to his lordly mansion in Grosvenor Square. But away with him!

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The last of the attacks upon the modern method of mounting Shakespeare with which I propose to deal is the accusation that under the present system scenic embellishment is not simple and inexpensive or subordinate to the dramatic interest. To this I say that, worthily to represent Shakespeare, the scenic embellishment should be as beautiful and costly as the subject of the drama being performed seems to demand; that it should not be subordinate to, but rather harmonious with, the dramatic interest, just as every other element of art introduced into the representation should be—whether those arts be of acting, painting, sculpture, music, or what not. The man who in his dramatic genius has made the nearest approach to Shakespeare is probably Wagner. Did Wagner regard his work as independent of the aids which his time gave him to complete the illusion of the spectator? No; he availed himself of all the effects with which modern art could help him, no doubt saying to himself, as Molière said, "Je prends mon bien où je le trouve." All these he enslaved in the service of the theatre. Wagner's works are primarily dramas heightened by the aid of music, of scenery, of atmosphere, of costumes, all gorgeous or simple as the situation requires. Stripped of these aids, would Wagner have the deep effect on audiences such as we have witnessed at Bayreuth? No! Every man should avail

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himself of the aids which his generation affords him. It is only the weakling who harks back echoically to the methods of a bygone generation. That painter is surely greater who sees nature—human and otherwise—with the clear eyes of his own time rather than through the blurred spectacles of a bygone age. Indeed, no man is great in any walk of life unless he is, in the best sense, of his time. A good workman does not quarrel with the tools his generation has given him, any more than a good general will reject the weapons of modern warfare on the score that muzzle-loaders were "good enough" for his forefathers.

Having noticed what there is to be said against the modern stage, let us now see what the modern stage has to say for itself. I take it that the entire business of the stage is—Illusion. As the entire aim of all art is Illusion, to gain this end all means are fair. The same is sometimes said of love and war, though I incline to dismiss this declaration as an ethical fallacy. Illusion, then, is the first and last word of the stage; all that aids illusion is good, all that destroys illusion is bad. This simple law governs us—or should govern us. In that compound of all the arts which is the art of the modern theatre, the sweet grace of restraint is of course necessary, and the scenic embellishments should not overwhelm the dramatic

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interest, or the balance is upset—the illusion is gone! This nice balance depends upon the tact of the presiding artist, and often the greatest illusion will be attained by the simplest means. For instance, a race run off the stage and witnessed by an excited and interested crowd of actors will probably be more effective than one devised of cardboard horses jerking to the winning-post in the face of the audience. Is illusion destroyed by getting as near as we can to a picture of the real thing? Supposing that in the course of a play a scene is placed "Before a castle," and a reference is made in the dialogue to the presence of the castle, would it be disturbing to an audience's imagination to see that castle painted on the cloth? If it did so disturb an audience, then the castle would be out of place. That is to say, if the audience turned to one another and whispered, "That is a castle—how extraordinary!" that would be breaking the illusion. Even more disturbing, however, would it be for the audience to turn to one another and to whisper, "But there ain't no castle!" It is quite conceivable that in former times a finely painted scene would have distracted the attention of the audience, because it was unexpected — but now appropriate illustration is the normal condition of the theatre.

I have said that I could understand such writers

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as Hazlitt, Lamb, and Emerson declaring that they preferred that Shakespeare should not be presented on the stage at all, for there is undoubtedly a tendency in performances other than those of the first order to destroy the illusion of the highly cultured; and I can conceive that such a one would say to himself, "Why undergo the unnecessary discomfort and expense of a visit to the theatre when I can read my Shakespeare at ease in my arm-chair?"

I can realise that a satisfactory result may be obtained by a number of ladies and gentlemen, in ordinary attire, playing before a green baize curtain and reciting the verse without recourse to stage appointments of any kind; for the imagination would not be offended by inappropriate accessories. But I cannot admit a compromise between this primitive form of dramatic representation and that which obtains to-day. It must be a frank convention or an attempt at complete illusion. To illustrate this, suppose we have a scene which takes place in Athens; it would be better to have no scene at all than a view of the Marylebone Road.

But possibly the best means of justifying the modern method of putting Shakespeare upon the stage, and the public's liking of that method, is to demonstrate that in principle at least it departs in no way from the manner in which the dramatist

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himself indicated that his works should be presented. Let us call Shakespeare himself as a witness on this issue, and show that he not only foresaw, but desired, the system of production that is now most in the public favour. Surely no complaint can be raised against those who seek, in putting an author's work upon the stage, to carry out the author's wishes in the matter; and it is better to follow those directions than to listen to the critics of three hundred years later, who clamour for a system exactly opposite to the one which the author distinctly advocated. In spite of what has been said to the contrary, I adhere to my reading of the prelude to *Henry V.*, and contend that in those most beautiful lines Shakespeare regretted the deficiencies of the stage of his day, for it is reasonable to suppose that in writing those lines he did not mean the opposite of what he said, as we are ingeniously told he did. Here it will be seen what store Shakespeare sets on illusion for the theatre, and how he implores the spectator to supply by means of his imagination the deficiencies of the stage. It is, of course, impossible on the stage to hold in numbers "the vasty fields of France"—but it is not impossible to suggest those "vasty fields." Can it be reasonably argued that, because in these lines he prays his auditors to employ the powers of their imagination, therefore we in these days are to be debarred

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from helping that imagination with the means at hand? But if we would get a really just view of Shakespeare's notions of how his dialogue and action were to be theatrically assisted, we need do nothing else than turn to the stage directions of his plays. To take three examples, I would beg you carefully to read the stage instructions in *The Tempest*, *Henry VIII.*, and *Pericles*, and ask yourselves why, if Shakespeare contemplated nothing in the way of what we term a production, he gave such minute direction for effects which even in our time of artistic and scientific mounting are difficult of realisation. Surely no one reading the vision of Katharine of Aragon can come to any other conclusion than that Shakespeare intended to leave as little to the imagination as possible, and to put upon the stage as gorgeous and as complete a picture as the resources of the theatre could supply!

And are we not inclined to undervalue a little the stage resources of the Elizabethan period? And are we not prone to assume that Shakespeare had far less in this direction to his hand than the scant limits for which we give him credit? Of scenery in the public theatres there was practically none, but in the private houses and in the castles of the nobles, when plays were played at the celebration of births and marriages and comings-of-age, we find that mounting, scenery, costume, and

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music were largely employed as adjuncts to these performances. In fact, when we read the description of some of the masques and interludes, when we consider the gorgeousness of display and the money that was expended for only single performances, we may well doubt whether even in our day we have surpassed what our forefathers of three centuries ago attained. So that in justifying the lavishness of modern productions we are not altogether thrown back upon the theory of Shakespeare's "prophetic vision" of what the stage would compass when he had been laid in his grave. These shows were undoubtedly witnessed by Shakespeare himself, and it is indeed not unreasonable to suppose that he acquired the love of gorgeous stage decorations from such performances witnessed by him in early life.

Take the question of what we call "properties." Shakespeare more than any other author seems to demand these at every turn. Swords, helmets, doublets, rings, and bracelets, and caskets and crowns are the inevitable paraphernalia of the Shakespearian drama; while as to music, the existence of an orchestra is vouched for by the recent discovery by a German savant of a contemporary drawing of the interior of the old Swan Theatre. This drawing is reproduced in Mr. Sidney Lee's remarkable "Life of Shakespeare," and proves conclusively that instrumentalists were employed

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to heighten the effect of the spoken words, as indeed Shakespeare's stage instructions continually indicate they should. When we come to the question of costumes, the case is even stronger. The burning of the Globe Theatre—an event, by the way, due to the realism of Shakespeare's stage management—robbed us of many important documents, but in the inventory still in existence of the costume wardrobe of a London theatre in Shakespeare's time ("Henslowe's Diary") there are mentioned particular costumes for cardinals, shepherds, kings, clowns, friars, and fools; green coats for Robin Hood's men, and a green gown for Maid Marian; a white and gold doublet for Henry V., and a robe for Longshanks, besides surplices, copes, damask frocks, gowns of cloth of gold and of cloth of silver, taffeta gowns, calico gowns, velvet coats, satin coats, frieze coats, jerkins of yellow leather and of black leather, red suits, grey suits, French pierrot suits, a robe "for to go invisibell" and four farthingales. There are also entries of Spanish, Moorish, and Danish costumes, of helmets, lances, painted shields, imperial crowns and papal tiaras, as well as of costumes for Turkish janissaries, Roman senators, and all the gods and goddesses of High Olympus!

No dramatist of the French, English, or Athenian stage relies as Shakespeare does for his effects on the dress of his actors; he not only

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appreciated the value of costume in adding picturesqueness to poetry, but he saw how important it is as a means for producing certain dramatic results. Many of his plays, such as *Measure for Measure, Twelfth Night,* the *Two Gentlemen of Verona, All's Well that Ends Well, Cymbeline, The Merchant of Venice,* and others, depend entirely on the character of the various dresses worn by the hero and heroine, and, unless these dresses be accurate, the author's effect will be lost. Nor are the examples of the employment of costume as a means of intensifying dramatic situations less numerous. Macbeth in his nightgown, Timon in rags, Richard flattering the citizens of London in mean and shabby armour and afterwards marching through the town in Crown and George and Garter, Prospero throwing off his magician's robe and calling for hat and rapier, and the very Ghost in *Hamlet* changing his mystical attire to produce different effects, are all examples of this. Nobody from the mere details of apparel has drawn such irony of situation—such immediate and tragic effect—such pity and pathos—as has Shakespeare himself. Armed *cap-à-pie,* the dead King stalks on the battlements of Elsinore because all is not well with Denmark. Shylock's gabardine is part of the reproach under which he writhes, and Orlando's blood-stained napkin strikes the first sombre note in *As You Like It.* Whatever was

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the case then, there is no reason that we should continue in imperfections which may be supposed to characterise Shakespeare's stage mounting. I have endeavoured to call Shakespeare as a witness for the justification of the public taste through the means of his printed words; we have, as it were, taken his evidence on commission; and I would have you read the delightful scene in the last act of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which is itself the most tinglingly satirical skit on the primitive methods of the stage—the ruthless exposition of which shows how Shakespeare himself, in this humorous lament of Adequacy, stood forth as the staunch advocate of a wider stage art. If we are to mount his plays in the manner of his time, we may go farther and hold that because in Shakespeare's day women's parts were represented by boys, actresses should be driven from the theatre. It is true that the practice is still in vogue in pantomime, except when the order is reversed and the leading lady is the "principal boy"; but I question whether the severest sticklers for the methods of Elizabethan days would advocate that Ophelia should be represented by Mr. Wilson Barrett and Desdemona by Mr. Benson.

Accuracy of detail, for the sake of perfect illusion, is necessary for us. What we have to see is that the details are not allowed to overshadow the principal theme, and this they never

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can do while they are carefully and reasonably introduced. As Victor Hugo says, "the smallest details of history and domestic life should be minutely studied and reproduced by the manager, but only as a means to increase the reality (not the realism) of the whole work, and to drive into the obscurest corners of a play an atmosphere of the general and pulsating life in the midst of which the characters are truest and the catastrophes consequently the most poignant."

The art of the theatre is of comparatively modern birth—it has become more widely appealing, because it has embraced within its radius many arts and many sciences, and because, through their aids, it epitomises for us, in an appealing and attractive form, the thoughts, the aspirations, the humours and the passions of humanity, as expressed by the dramatist. Campbell wrote it in his farewell stanzas to John Philip Kemble deftly enough:

"His was the spell o'er hearts
Which only acting lends—
The youngest of the sister Arts
Where all their beauty blends.
For ill can poetry express
Full many a tone or thought sublime,
And Painting mute and motionless
Steals but a glance of time.
But by the mighty actor brought
Illusion's perfect triumphs come,
Verses cease to be airy thought
And Sculpture to be dumb."

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There is another point of view of this question which I would fain touch upon before I shuffle off the coil of this paper—and that is the point of view of the artist himself. He works not only for the public, he works, and I think should work, primarily for himself. To satisfy his own artistic conscience should be his first aim—and this is what the public, unconsciously perhaps, appreciates and respects. Now, whatever may be said as to pandering to the public taste, I maintain that the artist himself would not remain satisfied with tawdry productions. Even were the public indifferent on this point (which happily it is not), it should still be the actor's best endeavour to aim at the highest that is within his reach and to exhaust the resources which his generation has given him. It is, I maintain, a fallacy to say that the manager merely follows the public taste; by giving a supply of his best he often creates a demand for what is good, and it is largely his initiative—the stimulus which his individual enthusiasm and imagination give to the production of great works—which preserves for those works the recognition and support of the public which follows him. Perhaps the ideal of the artist is not always understanded of the public, but unless he keep his ideal high, be sure the public will not regard him. If he descend below the level of public taste, the public will not take the trouble to ascend

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to his at his call. I do not claim that in this he is necessarily guided by a self-conscious code of ethics—it is oftenest his ambition that impels him to the highest work of which he is capable. He cannot, in fact, be merely adequate. And who are the trustees of the Stage's good? Despite the dicta of literary coteries, I maintain that the only men who have ever done anything for the advancement of the higher forms of the drama, the only men who have made any sacrifice to preserve a love of Shakespeare among the people, the only men who have held high the banner of the playhouse, on which the name of Shakespeare is inscribed, are the actors themselves.

These thoughts were passing through my mind one night, when the curtain had fallen for the last time on Fairyland—when the lights of Fairyland had one by one flickered out, and the fairies had gone home to bed. I was pacing the darkened stage, taking a final farewell of the scene of our happy revels, when, by the magic of imagination, perhaps the touch of Titania's wand, the empty stage was filled with another fairyland—the fairyland of the Elysian Fields—an unfamiliar scene, peopled with vaguely familiar forms. There, clad in his habit as he lived, was a spare figure, the domed arch of whose brow and whose serene smile reminded me strangely of a bust I had once seen

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in a Warwickshire church. I noticed that round his neck he wore an Elizabethan ruff. There, too, was a little man in powdered wig and flowered dressing-gown reciting now and then snatches of blank verse which awakened the echoes of my memory, and who was occasionally addressed as "Davy." The third was a portly and portentous figure, clad in a snuff-coloured square-cut coat, and wearing an ample wig. "Sir!" said the strangely robed and material looking spirit, "in Heaven's name what think you of the way they are presenting your plays on earth?" The poet only smiled. "Sir!" the other persisted, "as a commentator I protest. It seems to me to lampoon antiquity that works of literary merit such as yours undoubtedly possess should be decked out for the delectation of a new-fangled posterity with the vulgar aids of scenic embellishment and with prodigious and impertinent supererogation." Then he of the ruff spoke with a serene tolerance, something to this effect:

> I care not how 'tis done, so 'tis well done.
> My world is not for pedagogues alone—
> What is that passage, Davy, from *King Hal*,
> Where Chorus speaks my thoughts anent the stage
> Its narrow limits and its endless aims?

Then he of the flowered dressing-gown raised his voice:

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"O for a muse of fire, that would ascend
The brightest heaven of invention,
A kingdom for a stage, princes to act,
And monarchs to behold the swelling scene!
Then should the warlike Harry, like himself,
Assume the port of Mars; and at his heels,
Leash'd in like hounds, should famine, sword, and fire
Crouch for employment. But pardon, gentles all,
The flat unraised spirits that have dar'd
On this unworthy scaffold to bring forth
So great an object; can this cockpit hold
The vasty fields of France? Or may we cram
Within this wooden O the very casques
That did affright the air at Agincourt?
O, pardon! Since a crooked figure may
Attest in little place a million;
And let us, ciphers to this great accompt,
On your imaginary forces work.
Suppose within the girdle of these walls
Are now confined two mighty monarchies,
Whose high upreared and abutting fronts,
The perilous narrow ocean parts asunder;
Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts;
Into a thousand parts divide one man,
And make imaginary puissance.

. . . . .

And so our scene must to the battle fly;
Where—oh, for pity! we shall much disgrace
With four or five most vile and ragged foils,
Right ill-disposed in brawl ridiculous
The name of Agincourt."

"But, sir," persisted the rotund speaker, "is a poor player, whose title to a place among the

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arts I, as a literary authority dispute, to be permitted to put the stamp of his time on the literature of past centuries, and through the public of his hour to desecrate antiquity?"

"Fudge!" said the immortal poet, dropping into prose. "Dost thou recall, Davy, that passage in the Danish play in which I speak of the stage and its place in the civilisation of the world?"

Then the little man with the powdered wig loomed large as with pride he spoke of the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 't were, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.

"Sir!" said the shadow of the learned man—"Sir!" and the vision began to fade—"Sir!" it faltered—and silence fell again.

AFTER-THOUGHT

Much that was written in the foregoing essay remains true to-day. The new school of twelve years ago has become the old school of to-day. We have learned that Jaeger is not the only wear—the

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drab drama has already faded into dusky twilight. The day after to-morrow so soon becomes the day before yesterday. What is called "the new movement" is only the passing of dead matter. It cannot, I confess, be maintained that the present moment is a propitious one for the theatre. Ragtime and Futurism are holding carnival on our boards; but soon they too may be swept away into the limbo of the half-remembered, along with the stucco statues, the faded photographs and the crinoline classics of a bygone day. And almost before this printers' ink is dry the fickle public, sated with the ephemeral, may return once more to the ample bosom of the Drama.

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JIM

THE VINDICATION OF A MISUNDERSTOOD MICROBE

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JIM

The Vindication of a Misunderstood Microbe

WE live in the age of Wonder. To-day infant Science, groping and stumbling towards the light, leads Truth by the hand. In front of them dances a will-o'-the-wisp—it is Imagination, blind seer in the dark, weaving in his passage gossamer bridges of fancy across the morasses of Ignorance, and lighting up the mysteries of the Unseen World. Beyond, as in a transformation-scene of phantasmagoric post-impressionism, we dimly dis-

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cern the minarets of the spaceless Temple of Nature —in whose republic all is equality, whose tiniest atom is as important as her highest development.

Flesh itself, the superstructure of the bones of boastful man, is builded of minute organisms which in turn hold rank with the cataclysms of Nature, where order is but the spawn of chaos, and reason itself but the accidental offspring of madness fatigued.

But let us descend from the realms of transcendental blague to the brass tacks of my modest tale. My tale is of a microbe, and his name is Jim.

It was thus I made his acquaintance:

I have for friend a surgeon, one of the glories of medical research, who in his leisure moments —and they are few—is good enough to discuss with me the mysteries of the unseen world, as revealed by science. Such is his grasp of his subject that my friend Pipp (for that is his name) speaks in terms of familiarity of the countless myriads of inhabitants which reside in and govern each of our bodies. It is to the elucidation of the secret which has hitherto impenetrably shrouded this unknown world that Science to-day is bending its efforts. Soon the microbe will be recognised as the actual ruler of the universe; through me to-day it is for the first time allowed articulate utterance. If good and evil govern the world, it

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is because the opposing forces of beneficent and malignant microbes are constantly at war in the human body. On the beneficent microbe is dependent not only the health, the resistive strength of our bodies, but it will be seen by the revelations which I am privileged to make that our very mental state is determined by these denizens of the blood, to-day (thanks to me) no longer the dumb slaves of darkness and ignorance.

The dawn of the rule of the beneficent microbe is at hand—it is the triumph of health over disease. With a proper understanding of this great question we shall be enabled to control the evil germs that have afflicted mankind from its inception, and thus allow free play to the energies of the true friends of man. It may even be that we are on the threshold of discoveries which may reveal to us the yet deeper mysteries of the soul-world. In making public the facts which placed me at one bound in intimate communication with the occult world, I do not as a mere layman ask credence at the hands of a sceptical community, bounded, as it has hitherto been, by the precise revelations of a material science. I am aware that it may even be argued that my discoveries are traceable to an abnormal physical condition, in which the mind is subject to hallucinations. I do not dogmatise: I merely record what happened.

In a busy life such as mine, it is impossible to

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follow up the clues which momentary exaltation may reveal—impressions which we may not be able to recapture in the rush through space. I will now describe what happened in the plainest words.

My revelations came through the simple agency of a microscope.

My scientific friend motioned me to his arm-chair and pressed the microscope into my hand.

"Look at that little fellow," he said in his matter-of-fact manner. "That is the warrior who does battle for mankind; he is in us all, fighting the forces of death which are constantly besetting us. He is the most important factor with which modern surgery has to deal. His full Latin name is Streptococcus erysipalus, but I call him 'Jim' for short. Just you turn your eye on him."

I looked at Jim through the microscope, and he seemed to squirm, as though resenting the gaze of man. So powerful is the unique microscope possessed by my friend Pipp that I could actually see the expression in the face of the imprisoned microbe. While its body resembled that of the ordinary tadpole, the face of this world-weary aristocrat of the blood was strangely fascinating—not to say haunting. By its side the countenance of Mr. Arthur Balfour would appear plebeian. It seemed to me that a kind of sympathy was at once established between our two organisms.

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Many a time had I looked upon the malignant microbes whose faces resembled those of evil men I had met in life. The complacent grin of the sweater of labour, the leer of the blackmailer, the perennial smile of the man who is perpetually denying charity: all these were familiar to me. What a contrast was here!

As I gazed at this curious mite, I became conscious that I was undergoing a strange mental transformation—a sensation that I had only experienced in an operation under ether. The eyes of the bacillus appeared to grow larger and larger, until they seemed to draw me through their sockets into the inner recesses of the magic world. I half realised that I was under hypnotic influence. In my right hand I held a pencil; a piece of foolscap paper was by my side; and in this condition I wrote down what Jim (for I had suddenly become perfectly familiar with the subject of my tale) imparted to me in my trance. Though it would be ridiculous to suppose that our intercourse was conducted through the medium of the English language, yet it was thus on waking that I found the conversation recorded on the sheets of foolscap at my side. It is obvious that the confidences made to me could only have been through the means of telepathy which it would now appear can be set up between every kind of vital organism.

Thus the record begins:

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"You must not ask me about what is before us; only what is past can be vouchsafed. I am a part of life—for life springs from me. I am the primeval germ from which mankind was evolved. I know all that has gone since the beginning, for my memory is not like man's, confined to his own life; I remember through all my ancestry. No, there is no beginning, as there is no end. It is thus:"

Here the tadpole-like organism swallowed its tail and described a circle. I understood.

The record continues:

"It is idle to suppose that life is contained only in man, in animals, and vegetables—life is everywhere. At this moment your body is surrounded by an encircling army of microbes, constantly fighting for you against the onslaughts of inimical microbes, the emissaries of death. Yes, within a radius of some miles I see your surrounding retinue now. It is through this army of satellites that man influences and magnetises his fellows. You cannot account for your likes and dislikes. You cannot control the affections. Love itself is but the sympathetic mating of these microbes. You are unconscious why you influ-

* Illustration by the author.

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ence or are influenced by another human—the power of will itself, the exercise of one mentality over another, or over tens of thousands of other human beings, is dependent on the force of the microbes that attend you. Men call this force personality. My advice to mankind is: 'Tend your microbes with care, for on them depends your well being.'

"No, death has no terror for me, for as my life in this body departs it takes new shape; it may be that in my next state I shall glow in a fire or form part of a miasmic vapour. See, as I speak to you I give birth to a million progeny." (He did.) "If you put me on your tongue, I may fight a battle in your body against my eternal enemy Evil. I remember how an ancestor of mine saved Rome. He and I—for I am he and he is I—fought a mighty battle in the body of Julius Cæsar. I will relate it to you.

"Cæsar was afflicted with epilepsy. A great battle was in progress at a place called Bicentium. Nine times had the Roman general beaten back the hordes which attacked his position in overwhelming numbers; for three nights Cæsar had not slept. Our own army of beneficent microbes (called the Pink-faces) which inhabited his brain, had become weaker and weaker, while the malignant forces (the Greentails) were gaining strength; so much so, indeed, that Cæsar's body

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began to collapse. Night had fallen; around him stood his generals, eager for instructions, for the decisive moment of the great battle was at hand. In the hour of victory Cæsar had fallen into a trance. To follow up the victory meant the saving of Rome. Its destruction or safety depended on one man; the life of that one man was in turn dependent on the power of the Pink-faces to overcome the Greentails which swarmed in overwhelming numbers in his brain. Of the Pink-faces I was in supreme command. The world's history was hanging on my power so to direct the animating fluid through the arteries of the great general's brain that genius might assert itself over the sloth of disease. The main artery of Cæsar's brain was dammed up by dead and poison-engendering Pink-faces. To save Cæsar meant a mighty effort. Few men had shown greater consideration for his army of beneficent microbes than had Julius Cæsar. Often in great moments would he give to his brain fumes of rich heroising wines, and for this we were grateful. In the millionth part of a moment I decided on an almost forlorn hope which should save the life of the great man, turn the fortunes of the fight, and so save Rome.

"The *coup* demanded a great sacrifice of life; only sixteen myriad Pink-faces were left in Cæsar's veins. It was all-important that the Greentails should be lulled into inertia, and to this end I

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decided that fifteen myriad of us should be sacrificed. I knew they must be overwhelmed by the hundred myriad o' Greentails who were hungering. Accordingly, we made entrenchments of moribund microbes, behind which I encamped our reserves of one myriad of picked bacilli. The fifteen myriad I sent forth to battle, knowing their fate full well. 'Go forth,' I said, 'as food for our immortal enemies the Greentails!' The Pink-faces agreed as one microbe, and with a faint bacillic cry of 'Ave, Cæsar—morituri te salutant!' they sallied forth.

"It was a holocaust—but an effectual one. Soon the Greentails were gorged, sated, and inert. It was one of the moments of the world's history. At the command from me, we broke through our entrenchments and fell upon the Greentails, whose very sentries were asleep. Within ten minutes all the Greentails had been destroyed by the victorious Pink-faces. The healthy blood was once more allowed to rush through Cæsar's brain, and waking from his stupor he gave orders that twenty thousand Romans should go forth into the night to attack the enemy numbering one hundred thousand. These twenty thousand were to march to certain annihilation, while the remaining ten thousand were to steal secretly through the passes and attack the Gauls in the rear. (This plan of battle was clearly inspired by my own operation

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in Cæsar's brain.) On rushed the twenty thousand Romans to certain death; they were overcome by the enemy who occupied the forts left empty by our ten thousand, who now, led by Cæsar himself, made the encircling movements towards the enemy's rear. While the Gauls were feasting in celebration of their victory, they were fallen upon by Cæsar's army and were dispersed in all directions, leaving twenty-five thousand men slain on the field. This is a brief history of the battle of Bicentium.

"Yes," continued Jim, "I live by destroying evil; I am an eater of evil—my digestion requires this stimulus, for the beneficent microbe is not cannibalistic—our own kind disagrees with us. In order to live, we must be constantly at war with evil. Men say that two negatives make a positive. We microbes hold the paradox equally true (as most paradoxes are) that two positives make a negative, for if good eats good, we die! We perish of perfection."

To perish of perfection, I thought—how wonderful an end! If that end could be vouchsafed to mankind—to die of a disease called BEAUTY! That instead of dying of the ugliness of disease, we might mercifully become more and more perfect as we approached death, so that our loved ones might stand round our deathbed

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in mute admiration, gazing upon the lovely climax of life, and the vanishing point of Beauty—Death! That our end should be as a beautiful song fading into silence, or as a fountain rising higher and higher till, kissing heaven, it should spend its splendour in prismatic spray and so gently fall into the peaceful basin of Eternity.

To perish of perfection—yes, that is the ultimate goal of humanity! My brain was obsessed with this ideal. Then I underwent a swoon within a swoon, wherein it seemed to me that I was on the threshold of a great discovery—the ultimate perfection of mankind. A kind of patent millennium presented itself to my frenzied brain—the survival of good by the extermination of evil. In my dream it seemed to me that I was the great benefactor of mankind. In the visions of sleep it is difficult to release one's second being from the realities of life. I had often wondered, in patting little children on the head, why they had a soft spot in the middle of their skulls. In my dream I set up a laboratory, and after dissecting several monkeys and some babies, I arrived at the conclusion that through this yet open channel one could, by an infusion of myriads of beneficent microbes, destroy those other malignant microbes which go to make the vicious part of our natures. A new conception of ethics filled my mind. What is virtue? The preponderance of

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Pink-faces in us. What is vice? The preponderance of Greentails. The millennium was in sight on the distant horizon of my imagination. I was acclaimed the greatest benefactor of mankind. Standing on the plinth of the Nelson column, I imparted my great discovery to a mass meeting in Trafalgar Square. The meeting was presided over by the Archbishop of Canterbury; on his right His Grace was supported by Lord Charles Beresford and Mr. Winston Churchill, cheek by jowl; while on his left sat Mrs. Pankhurst in jet, and Mr. Gordon Craig, the president of the Siberian Stage Society. As I write, the echo of the cheers that greeted my announcement still rings in my ears. The new world had begun—the reign of the beneficent microbe. All humanity flocked to the National Hospital which bore my name. Children were brought from all corners of the earth that they might submit to the system of inoculation by which the antiseptic of virtue exterminated in early youth the vice which in past ages had afflicted the human race.

In my trance I was swiftly projected through the centuries to witness the triumph of my own genius. On every side I saw statues and almshouses erected in my honour. Wars had ceased automatically; theft was unknown. The Ten Commandments were no longer taught at school, for none had been broken for centuries. Crime

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was unheard of; passion was dethroned, and in its place there reigned a kind of platonic free love. I stalked for centuries through a bloodless neutral-tinted world.

But gradually it seemed to me that a transformation took place; I peered into the new world—it was neutral-tinted—there were no vices, consequently there were no virtues. It was borne in upon me that in the march of centuries the machinery of the world had become rusty. Butchers' meat did not arrive in the morning, and the necessaries of life became scarcities; even the common potato was a luxury. I began to realise the imperfection of perfection!

Time rolled on. I looked again, and all mankind—men and women—were on their knees praying to me to give them back their vices; and I realised that the old world—the wicked old world—had been run by the vices, that it was greed and envy and avarice that caused the wheels of the world to revolve. I stood in a very havoc of peace, impotent to restore the imperfections for which humanity was shrieking.

Suddenly I seemed to waken from my parenthetic dream. My eyes were once more fixed on the face at the other end of the microscope. Then Jim spoke again:

"There can be no perfection."

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"You mean," said I, "that if there were no evil in the world, there would be no good?"

"You've hit it," retorted Jim. (The slang was his—not mine.) He continued: "All subsists by elemental strife, and passions are the elements of life."

"You are quoting Pope," said I.

"No," Jim replied; "Pope quoted me. I inhabited his brain at the time he wrote his Essay on Man, and I inspired the passage with which you appear to be familiar."

"A curious coincidence," I remarked.

"Do you think so?" said Jim coldly.

"Now I see," I ventured. "What is true among microbes is true among us humans. If there were no vices there would be no virtues."

A silence more eloquent than words fell upon me; it was the silence of wisdom.

"Tell me one thing more—you who hold the mystery of all the past ages—tell me what of the future? What of eternity? What ——" I cried in a mad frenzy of egotism, "what of the life hereafter? Vouchsafe to me the secret of Immortality!"

A look came over the face of the microbe, compared with which that of the eternal sphinx was frankly communicative. A guttural sound, like that emitted by an inarticulate telephone, filled

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my head. The hand that held my pencil seemed paralysed. I was suddenly shot back through the eye of the world-large microbe, which seemed momentarily to shrivel to a speck. I felt a heavy human hand on my shoulder. I had awakened from my trance.

"What's the matter, old man?" It was the everyday voice of my friend Pipp. I put down the microscope and gazed at the MS. in front of me, the last sentences of which were blurred and vague as the strokes of a madman conducting an imaginary orchestra of apes.

"Take three long breaths," said Pipp.

I took them. "I have been talking to Jim," I said.

"And a precious lot of nonsense you've written down," my friend replied.

"Who knows?" said I. "The longer I live, the less do I scoff at the manifestations of the immaterial. You only deal with what you see—I have been in touch with him—with Jim—and Jim knows." So saying, I passed my forefinger over the piece of glass on which the now invisible body of Jim had lain, and applied it to my tongue.

"Ah, my friend," said the doctor, looking somewhat anxiously into my face. "You pull yourself together—you want a rest-cure. Now I come to think of it, I always thought there was

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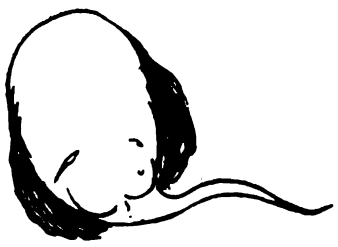
a queer look in your eyes. Let me prescribe a tonic for you."

"Thanks," I replied; "I have eaten Jim, and I feel strangely better."

* * * *

Pipp and I are still friends—with a difference. We never speak of Jim.



AFTER-THOUGHT

How true all this remains—how unassailable!

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THE IMAGINATIVE FACULTY

Being an Address delivered at the Royal Institution

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THE IMAGINATIVE FACULTY

WHEN the gift of Imagination was conferred upon mankind, a double-edged sword, garlanded with flowers, was thrust into baby-hands. Just as the highest joys which are known to us are those of the imagination, so also are our deepest sorrows the sorrows of our fantasy. Love, ambition, heroism, the sense of beauty, virtue itself, become intensified by the imagination, until they reach that acute and passionate expression which renders them potent factors for good or evil in individuals. Even so has the imagination ever been the strongest power in fostering the aspirations, in shaping the destinies of nations. It is the vision through the lens of which we see the realities of life, either in the convex or in the concave, diabolically distorted or divinely out of drawing.

The theme is a somewhat wide one; and a vague self-persuasion hints to me that wiser and profounder things have been written and spoken of it than any to which I shall be

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able to give utterance. But valour is the better part of discretion, and no plagiarist is so prolific as he who does not read. Happily, or unhappily, I happen to be one of those whose valour has not been blunted by too much speculative reading, whose imagination has not been cramped by research, nor warped by scientific knowledge. Indeed, I had at first thought of styling my address, *The Imaginative Faculty, with some Reflections on the Pernicious Habit of Reading Books*, but that the sub-title seemed to me to smack of a levity not entirely in harmony with the classic—shall I say austere?—traditions of the assembly which I have the distinguished honour of addressing—an honour which I value the more since it is now conferred for the first time on a member of my calling.

It is, I say, this very abstinence from that delightful vice of annexing the thoughts of others through the medium of books which has emboldened me to explore the giddy heights and latent tracts of the imagination, regardless of the landmarks erected by those who have trodden its territory less falteringly; but just as each eye will catch a different reflection of a landscape, just as a musical instrument possessing but a limited number of notes will yet admit of an infinite variety of combination, likewise I may be so fortunate as to give some variations of the eternal

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melody whose *leit-motif* poets and thinkers have sung to mankind. And in endeavouring to narrow down the discussion of this imaginative faculty to its influence on my own art, I shall at least be able to speak from personal observation and, in that sense, with the authority of experience.

"Can acting be taught?" is a question which has been theoretically propounded in many a magazine article, and has vexed the spirit of countless debating societies. It is answered in practice on the stage, and, I think, triumphantly answered, in the negative. Acting, in fact, is purely an affair of the imagination—the actor more than any other artist may be said to be the "passion-winged minister of thought."

Children are born actors. They lose the faculty only when the wings of their imagination are weighted by self-consciousness. It is not everyone to whom is given the capacity of always remaining a child. It is this blessed gift of receptive sensibility which it should be the endeavour (the unconscious endeavour perhaps) of every artist to cultivate and to retain.

There are those who would have us believe that technique is the end and aim of art. There are those who would persuade us that the art of acting is subject to certain mathematical laws, forgetting that these laws are but the footnotes

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of adroit commentators, and in no sense the well-springs of art. What I venture to assert is that all that is most essential, most luminous, in acting may be traced to the imaginative faculty. It is this that makes the actor's calling at once the most simple and the most complex of all the arts. It is this very simplicity which has caused many to deny to acting a place among the arts, and which has so often baffled those who would appraise the art of acting as a precise science, and measure it by the yard-measure of unimaginative criticism. Yet in another sense no art is more complex than the dramatic art in its highest expression, for in none is demanded of its exponent a more delicate poise, a subtler instinct; none is more dependent on that acute state of the imagination, on that divine insanity which we call genius.

The actor may be said to rank with, if after, the philosopher. He, like the philosopher, is independent of recognised laws. The histrionic art is indeed essentially a self-governed one. Its laws are the unwritten laws of the book of nature, illuminated by the imagination.

But if the actor can claim exemption from academic training, it would be idle to affirm that he is independent of personal attributes, or that he can reach any degree of eminence without those accomplishments which the strenuous exercise of art alone can give. His Pegasus, however, should

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be tamed in the broad arena of the stage rather than in the enervating stable of the Academy.

In acting, in fact, there is an infinity to learn, but infinitely little that can be taught. The actor must be capable, of course, of pronouncing his native language, and of having a reasonable control over the movements of his limbs; but, thus equipped, his technical education is practically complete. He is his own "stock-in-trade." The painter has his pigments, the poet his pen, the sculptor his clay, the musician his lute; the actor is limited to his personality—he plays upon himself.

To give free range to the imaginative quality is the highest accomplishment of the actor. He whose imagination is most untrammelled is he who is most likely to touch the imagination of an audience. To arrive at this emancipation of the mind is his ultimate and highest achievement. The development of this sensitive or receptive condition into the creative state whereby he can rouse the imagination of his hearers depends largely on the surrounding influences of life. A general knowledge of men and things is, of course, the first essential; but I doubt whether education, in its accepted sense, is so necessary or indeed desirable in an artistic career as it is in what I may call the more concrete walks of life. The midwife of science is sometimes the undertaker of art.

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The Imaginative Faculty

I have touched upon what, in its restricting influence on the imaginative faculty, I have called the pernicious habit of reading books—a practice which in its too free indulgence may tend to fetter the exercise of that imagination and that observation of life which are so essential to the development of the artist. Some people are educated by their memories, others by observation, aided by the imagination. One man will be able by a look at a picture, or by the scanning of an old manuscript, to project himself into any period of history; while another will by laborious unimaginative study acquire no more artistic inspiration than can be obtained by learning the "Encyclopædia Britannica" by heart. Shakespeare shows us what he thinks of pedants:

"Study is like the heaven's glorious sun,
That will not be deep-searched with saucy looks;
Small have continual plodders ever won,
Save base authority from others' books."

I wonder what Bacon would have said to this! I have often noticed that those who devote their spare energies to indiscriminate reading acquire a habit of thinking by memory, and thus gradually lose the faculty which the spontaneous observation of life tends to quicken. Their thought becomes artificial—they think by machinery—originality loses its muscle; the memory is developed at the expense of the imagination. Take any incident of every-

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day life—to the man who is not in the habit of exercising his imagination it will appear as a vulgar fact; to him who sees the same incident with the dramatic, the imaginative eye, it will give birth to an original thought, which is often more vital than a quotation.

The education of the artist, then, should be directed rather to the development of the imagination than to the cold storage of memory. For purposes of immediate information the British Museum is always open to him; the judges of the land are ever ready to set him right on points of law, into a misapprehension of which a too lively imagination may have led him.

I am so bold as to think that a University education, which is so helpful to success in other callings, may be a source of danger to the artist. The point of view is apt to become academic, the academic to degenerate into the didactic—for all cliques, even the most illustrious, have a narrowing tendency. The development of those qualities which are so favourable to distinction in other callings may tend to check in the artist that originality which is so essential to the exercise of our fascinating, if fantastic, calling. I maintain that such surroundings, and the influences of a too prosperous society, may tend to hinder rather than to foster the growth of this sensitive plant, which will often flourish in the rude winds of

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adversity, and perish in the scent-laden *salons* of fashion.

To argue that the artist should shut himself off from the world, and wrap himself round with a mantle of dignified ignorance, would of course be absurd. I have already said that a knowledge of men and things is essential to him, and this knowledge is manifestly impossible unless he be in sympathetic touch with his generation, for we cannot give out what we have not taken in. His should be the bird's-eye view. But the allurements of society should never be allowed to absorb or enslave him, lest after sipping its enervating narcotic he should drift from the broad stream of life into the sluggish backwater of self-indulgence. The poet, like the soldier, may "caper nimbly in a lady's chamber to the lascivious pleasing of a lute," but if he dance a too frequent attendance in the ante-chamber of fashion, the jealous muse deserts him, and the poet's song henceforth finds utterance in the lisping treble of the "*vers de société*," and a fitful inspiration in the chronicling of an illustrious birth or a serene demise. It takes a genius to survive being made Poet Laureate—indeed, this official reward might often be conferred only on the poet when he is dead, to benefit his family and to point out the beauties of his works to an otherwise indifferent posterity.

Of all the fetters which cramp the imagination,

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none is so frequent as self-consciousness. With many of us this failing becomes a disease. The actor is more liable to its attacks than any other artist, since he cannot separate his personality from his work. This is the necessary condition under which he works; he cannot, like the poet or the painter, choose his mood—he is the slave of the moment. Under what disadvantages would a painter work if his patron were standing at his elbow watching each stroke of his brush!

It is only when the mind of the actor is emancipated from the trammels of his surroundings that his imagination is allowed full play. The nervousness which afflicts him in his first performance of a new rôle will often paralyse his imagination; though it is true that the dependence on this imaginative faculty varies in individuals.

I remember a first night some years ago when I was reduced to a state of mental and physical pulp; at the end of the first act the brilliant and witty author entered the green-room of the theatre. "Well, and how did I get on?" I asked, hungry for encouragement. Scanning my trembling and perspiring form, the author observed: "I see your skin has been acting, at all events."

This self-consciousness, which will often hinder rather than stimulate the nervous energy, is, I think, a curiously English characteristic, and is due in many instances as much to early training

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as to an inborn tendency. Our Irish brothers—or should I say cousins?—owing to the possession of a more untrammelled imagination, are not nearly so subject to its influence. It is this happy superiority to public opinion that renders the average Irishman such a fluent orator. Most good actors have either Irish or Jewish blood. To the average Irishman is given the faculty of seeing the incidents of life with a dramatic eye, and he has an infinitely greater facility in clothing them in picturesque language. In him the journalistic instinct is strongly developed. A somewhat bloodless battle was fought during the Egyptian war—the battle of Tel-el-Kebir. A newspaper discussion arose as to the pronunciation of this word. The question was whether it should be pronounced according to the frenzied patriotism of the Irish war correspondent:

"There they plied the bloody sabre
On thy plains, oh Tel-el-Kebir!"

or whether, as the less impassioned and less imaginative Saxon might put it:

"The fighting was not too severe
Upon thy plains, Tel-el-Kebir!"

In order to emancipate the mind from this self-consciousness—in order, in fact, to be at his best—the actor will sometimes have recourse to stimulants. This habit has proved the ruin of

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many a great actor. In his effort to reach that tingling condition of the nervous system which enables him, in forgetting himself, to impress his audience, the actor may find the grave of his career. Two homely instances of the futility of this endeavour to conquer self-consciousness by artificial means have come within my knowledge. The first came to me at second hand through an acquaintance, himself a most respectable, not to say eminent, member of society, whose boon companion of his college days was an extremely well regulated but highly intellectual youth, to whom the one stumbling-block in life was that he could not rid himself of an overpowering self-consciousness. This cast a gloom over his whole life, and prevented him from playing a convivial part at those functions which I believe are called "Wines"—occasions on which undergraduate youth scale those higher altitudes of poetic sentiment, and plumb those lower depths of philosophic pessimism, which vary with the fluctuations of the alcoholic barometer. He complained that even on these uproarious occasions his self-consciousness was ever present, reproaching him for the reprehensible condition which he vainly strove to attain. There he sat, a perennial skeleton at the feast. My friend suggested that on the very next opportunity which offered itself he should by a painstaking assimilation of the

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grape make one herculean effort to rid himself of that chronic self-consciousness which weighed so heavily upon him. The well-regulated youth gave his word of honour that he would yield himself to the wildest debauchery. And he did. That very night he joined in the revels of his intellectual inferiors. My friend awaited his return in anxious expectation. At 4 A.M. he heard a noise as of someone falling upstairs, and soon his companion appeared in the doorway in an advanced state of alcoholic decomposition. "Alas!" said he, "my legs are drunk, my tongue is drunk, but I haven't lost my self-coshiousness."

The other instance was that of an actor. In the scene between Othello and Brabantio, Brabantio was being played by an old actor of the sound and furious school, who was strangely uncertain in his movements as well as in the words of his part. He had reached the well-known injunction to Othello:

> "Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see;
> She has deceiv'd her father, and may thee,"

which he stuttered forth thus—

> "Look after her, Othello, keep your eye on her;
> She has made a fool of her father and may do the same to you."

He staggered off the stage, and, weeping bitterly, fell into the arms of an actor. "Young

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man," he said, "let this be a lesson to you. I have been on the stage for forty-five years, and this is the first time I have ever suffered from stage fright."

I have endeavoured to show how the imaginative faculty in acting may be cramped by self-consciousness, and how susceptible it is to social and other influences which surround the life of the artist. In the same way it is also susceptible of infinite cultivation if left to its own devices.

I am willing to admit that every artist works according to his own method; but I maintain that that art is likely to produce the greatest effect which is least reliant on what are called the canons of art; that is to say, that art is the more vital which springs spontaneously from the yielding up of the artist to his imagination. I have known actors who frequently arrive at many of their best effects through patient study; indeed, I believe, great actors have been known to study each gesture before a looking-glass. This seems to me, nevertheless, a mistaken system, and one certainly which would be destructive to the effects of those who prefer to rely on the mood of the moment. That genius is best which may be described as an infinite capacity for not having to take pains.

Another aspect of our art which has of late been much debated is whether it is desirable that the

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actor should or should not sink his individuality in the part he is playing; whether, in fact, the actor should be absorbed in his work, or the work be absorbed in the actor. It seems to me, in spite of all that certain writers are never tired of dinning into our ears, that the higher aim of the artist is so to project his imagination into the character he is playing that his own individuality becomes merged in his assumption. This indeed is the very essence of the art of acting.

I remember that when I first went upon the stage I was told that to obtain any popular success an actor must be always himself, that the public even like to recognise the familiar voice before he appears on the scene, that he should, if possible, confine himself to what was called "one line of business," and that he should seek to cultivate a certain mannerism which should be the badge of his individuality. Surely, this is an entirely erroneous and mischievous doctrine!

Indeed, I will go so far as to maintain that the highest expression in every branch of art has always been the impersonal. The greatest artist that ever lived was the most impersonal, he was the most impersonal because the most imaginative. I mean our own Shakespeare. Where do we find him in his work? The spirit, the style everywhere —but the man? Nowhere—except in the sense *le style c'est l'homme.*

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Take *Othello*, for instance, the finest perhaps, in a dramatic sense, of all his stage-plays. If we think we have found him in the noble outbursts of the Moor, in the overmastering passion of the simple-minded warrior, we lose him immediately in the intellectual sympathy which he seems to lavish on the brutal cynicism of the subtle and brilliant Iago. In one moment he soars to the very heights of poetic ecstasy, in the next he descends with equal ease and apparent zest into the depths of sottish animalism. We find him in the melodious wail of Hamlet, we lose him in the hoggish grunts of Falstaff.

What sort of a man Shakespeare was we none of us know. We are led to believe that he was an excellent business man, with a taste for agriculture. In his work he becomes effaced—his spirit is like a will-o'-the-wisp. His mind is like the Irishman's flea—"you no sooner put your finger upon him, but ye find he isn't there." His was essentially a plastic mind—he was capable of entering into the thoughts of all men, and made their point of view his own. Nowhere did he insist on his personal predilections—he was, in fact, the artist—the creator—he looked upon mankind with all the impartiality of a god, he laid their hearts bare with the imperturbability of an inspired vivisector.

The abiding hold which the play of *Hamlet* has exercised over so many successive generations is

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mainly due to its wondrous mystery which holds the imagination of an audience enthralled, for, in the conventional sense, it cannot be said to be a pattern stage-play. In what a masterful fashion is the keynote of mystery struck in the very first scene on the ramparts! From the moment when the solitary soldier calls through the night, "Who's there?" the imagination of the audience is held spellbound; with such marvellous power is it played upon by the dramatist that from the first scene a modern sceptical audience accepts the supernatural basis of the play. Much inspired nonsense has been written on the subject of *Hamlet* by unimaginative commentators. Yet to him who will approach Shakespeare's masterpiece in the right spirit, it will be seen to have that simplicity which is characteristic of all great works.

Nearly all the mad doctors have diagnosed Hamlet's case, and nearly all claim him as their own. This is the tendency of the specialist. It is rather a question, I think, as to the sanity of Hamlet's commentators. An astounding instance of this super-subtlety—(in itself a symptom of madness)—is shown in the comments of some of the German critics. One of these gravely informs us that the passage, "You know sometimes he walks for hours here in the lobby," proves beyond a doubt that Hamlet was really a fat man, for, in order to reduce his obesity, he took four hours'

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regular exercise in the lobby; but perhaps our German friend was a specialist in banting. Another critic, Leo by name, supplies a still more marvellous instance of painstaking misunderstanding of the obvious in his elucidation of Hamlet's hysterical outburst at the conclusion of the play-scene. In this, some actors use the word peacock, and others pajock, signifying toad. But our critic throws a new light upon the passage which may commend itself to some realistic Hamlet of the future. The word in dispute was, says Leo, really "hiccup," which was intended as a stage direction. Our genial wiseacre argues that Hamlet intended to call the King an *ass*, and "ass" certainly rhymes with "was." The passage, he contends, should read thus:

> "For thou dost know, oh Damon dear,
> This realm dismantled was
> Of Jove himself, and now reigns here
> A very—very—(*hiccups*)."

Hamlet's indignation is apparently too deep for words—the very height of tragic emotion finds expression in a hiccup! The unimaginativeness of the critic is in this case absolutely monumental.

In *Macbeth* we have another instance of the astounding imaginativeness of Shakespeare. The test of the greatness of a work is that it is not only

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great in itself, but that it is the cause of greatness in others. A very striking instance of this suggestive fecundity of the poet was told me of Mrs. Siddons in her playing of the sleep-walking scene. At the words "All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand," the conscience-stricken woman sees with her mind's eye a stain upon her hand, and, raising it to her mouth, desperately sucks the imaginary blood from it, spitting it out as she does so. The daring of this piece of realism, which might strike the commonplace as vulgar, was in reality a stroke of imaginative genius, and, I am told, produced an electrical effect upon the audience.

In dramatic literature that work is highest which is most suggestive, which gives to the artist as to the spectator most opportunities of weaving round the work of the poet the embroidery of his own imagination.

If I may instance a modern play, I should say that this quality is displayed in an eminent degree in Ibsen's work *The Master Builder*. We know that this play is condemned by some as a flagrant outrage of conventional form, while others dismiss it as a commonplace presentation of a commonplace theme. I must confess that, judged by Ibsen's plays, Scandinavia, in its sordid suburbanism, seems to me an undesirable abiding-

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place. All the more wonderful is it that the magician should have been able to conjure up from this dank soil, which would appear congenial only to mushroom-growths, such wondrous and variegated plants. In witnessing this play we are moved by its power, we are fascinated by its originality. Few fail to feel the thud of its pulse. Each weaves his own version of its message. The master has gained his end; he has stirred the imagination of his audience; he alone remains sphinx-like, unexplained; he is the artist—wise master!

In using Shakespeare as an illustration of the highest development of the imaginative artist, and in claiming for his work that impersonality which I hold to be the distinguishing mark of his genius, I am far from denying that many of our greatest writers, many of our greatest painters and actors, have been those whose personality is most resonant in their work, but I say that the intrusion of that personality is not the merit of their work, but rather its limitation.

No doubt a more easily won popularity is awarded by that large public which demands an exhibition of individuality rather than of characterisation, of personality rather than of impersonation; yet it is better to strive for the higher, even if we miss it, than to clutch at the lower, even if it be within easy reach.

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The Imaginative Faculty

The adroit actor should be able at will to adapt his individuality to the character he is portraying. By the aid of his imagination he becomes the man, and behaves unconsciously as the man would or should behave; this he does instinctively rather than from any conscious study, for what does not come spontaneously may as well not come at all. Even the physical man will appear transformed. If he imagine himself a tall man, he will appear so to the audience—how often have we not heard people exclaim that an orator appeared to grow in height as his speech became eloquent? If the actor imagine himself a fat man he will appear fat to the spectator. There is a kind of artistic conspiracy between the actor and his audience. It is not the outer covering, called the "make up," which causes this impression; it is the inner man—who talks fat, walks fat, and thinks fat. The actor, even though he be peasant born, will be able by the power of his imagination to acquire the rare gift of distinction. He will be able, by its aid to become a king—not the accidental king, who in actual life may lack dignity, but the king of our imagination.

It is on record that Napoleon once administered a rebuke to Talma, with whom he had a dramatic affinity. The actor, it seems, in playing a Roman emperor, made violent gestures. Napoleon, criticising this exuberance, said, "Why use these un-

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necessary flourishes? When I give an order I require nothing to enforce it—my word is enough. This is no way to behave as an emperor." The first Napoleon was a great actor, and his dramatic instinct was not the least formidable among those qualities which made him such a power in the world's history.

As on the stage, so it is in real life; we are not what we are—we become what we imagine ourselves to be. A man is not always what he appears to his valet. He often finds his truest expression in his work. A great man will often appear uninteresting and commonplace in real life. Who has not felt that disappointment? The real man is to be found in his work.

It is this personality which is often obliterated by his biographer, for detraction is the only tribute which mediocrity can pay to the great. This literary autopsy adds a new terror to death. A man might be permitted to leave his reputation to his critics, as he would leave his brains to a hospital.

Napoleon was able to imagine himself an emperor, and, circumstances conspiring with him, he became one. His enemies thought they were belittling him by calling him an actor, and the Pope, whose temporalities he seized, could only retort "*Comediante*"; but the comedian continued to play his part of emperor while the Pope was in exile.

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The artistic methods of the first Napoleon are brought into strong relief when contrasted with those of his less imaginative nephew. Indeed, the difference between the imaginative and the unimaginative actor is well exemplified in these two. Had Napoleon the Third possessed the true dramatic instinct, he would not have been guilty of the Boulogne fiasco. To impress the populace with the supernatural significance of his mission, he had recourse to the stagy device of a tame eagle, which, as the emblem of empire, was at a given cue to alight upon him. But the bird, which had been trained to perch upon his top-hat, disdained his crown. Here we have an illustration of the futility of unimaginative stage-management.

The imagination is the mind's eye. To him who has it not, life presents itself as a picture possessing all the merits of a photograph, and none of the blemishes of a work of art. He who does not treasure it will lose its use.

Certain lower forms of animals have what closely resembles a third eye in the middle of their skulls, and there can be little doubt that this auxiliary eye was used by our prehistoric ancestors for the purpose of seeing objects overhead. The Cyclops was probably a throwback of this species.

In the lower forms of animals, I am told—in lizards, for instance—this eye is infinitely more

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developed than it is in the higher animals, in whom, from disuse, it has become practically extinct. Even so will the imagination, this third eye of the mind, looking heavenward, lose its function unless it be exercised. The waning of the imagination is, next to the loss of his childish faith, the most tragic thing in a man's life. I can conceive no fate more terrible than that which befalls the artist in watching, with still undiminished powers of self-observation, the slow ebbing of the imaginative faculty; to see it drifting out to sea in the twilight of life. Better be deprived of sight than to feel that the world has lost its beauty—for the blind are happier than the blear-eyed.

A passage in Darwin's "Autobiography" seems to me a pathetic illustration, and is interesting in its unflinching self-analysis.

". . . . I am not conscious of any change in my mind during the last thirty years, excepting in one point presently to be mentioned; nor, indeed, could any change have been expected, unless one of general deterioration. But my father lived to his eighty-third year with his mind as lively as ever it was, and all his faculties undimmed; and I hope that I may die before my mind fails to a sensible extent. . . . Up to the age of thirty, or beyond it, poetry of many kinds—such as the works of Milton, Gray, Byron, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley—gave me great pleasure, and

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even as a schoolboy I took intense delight in Shakespeare, especially in the historical plays. I have also said that formerly pictures gave me considerable, and music very great, delight. But now for many years I cannot endure to read a line of poetry: I have tried to read Shakespeare, and found it so intolerably dull that it nauseated me. I have also lost my taste for pictures and music. Music generally set me thinking too energetically on what I have been at work on, instead of giving me pleasure. I retain some taste for fine scenery, but it does not cause me the exquisite delight which it formerly did. On the other hand, novels, which are works of the imagination, though not of a very high order, have been for years a wonderful relief and pleasure to me, and I often bless all novelists. A surprising number have been read aloud to me, and I like all if moderately good, and if they do not end unhappily—against which a law ought to be passed. A novel, according to my taste, does not come into the first class unless it contains some person whom one can thoroughly love—and if a pretty woman, all the better. . . . This curious and lamentable loss of the higher æsthetic tastes is all the odder, as books on history, biographies, and travels (independently of any scientific facts which they may contain), and essays on all sorts of subjects, interest me as much as ever they did. My mind seems to have become a

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kind of machine for grinding general laws out of large collections of facts, but why this should have caused the atrophy of that part of the brain alone, on which the higher tastes depend, I cannot conceive. A man with a mind more highly organised or better constituted than mine would not, I suppose, have thus suffered; and, if I had to live my life again, I would have made a rule to read some poetry and listen to some music at least once every week; for perhaps the parts of my brain now atrophied would thus have been kept active through use. The loss of these tastes is a loss of happiness, and may possibly be injurious to the intellect, and more probably to the moral character, by enfeebling the emotional part of our nature. . . ."

It would be interesting to know whether the cultivation of the æsthetic faculties would have strengthened or weakened in Darwin those other forces which have made him such a shining figure in the history of science. It may be that what was a loss to the man was a gain to humanity, for to everyone is vouchsafed only a limited power of concentration.

Nor must it be supposed that Science and Art are separate and opposing forces; they are rather two mighty currents springing from one parent source. The greatest victories which mind has

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achieved over matter have been due to the soaring flights of the imagination rather than to a mere crawling research along the surface of facts.

This hall, wherein Faraday, Huxley, and Tyndall have spoken, has witnessed displays of the imagination equal to those of the highest poetry. As the diver dives for pearls into the depths of the sea, so does science project itself on the wings of the imagination into the mists which shroud the vast unexplained, snatching in its flight the secrets which solve the mysteries of the universe, and pointing out to mankind the invisible stepping-stones connecting the known with the unknown.

It was in this hall that Professor Dewar summoned the elusive and invisible atmosphere, which since all time has enveloped the earth, and with the wand of science compelled it to appear before you in a palpable and visible form. Even so does the imagination distil from the elemental ether of thought and truth the liquid air of art.

I have endeavoured to show that, just as the highest achievement of science is that which we owe to the imagination, so also is the highest achievement of art that which carries us out of the sordid surroundings of everyday life into the realms of idealised truth. Art's loftiest mission is to preserve for us, amid the din and clash of life, those illusions which are its better part—to epitomise for us the aspirations of mankind, to stifle its

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sobs, to nurse its wounds, to requite its unrequited love, to sing its lullaby of death. It is the unwept tear of the criminal, it is the ode of the agnostic to immortality, it is the toy of childhood, the fairyland of the mature, and gilds old age with the afterglow of youth.

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HAMLET FROM AN ACTOR'S PROMPT BOOK

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HAMLET FROM AN ACTOR'S PROMPT BOOK

1895.

IT seems somewhat bold to attempt to say anything fresh about Hamlet—a subject upon which more wise and more foolish things have been spoken than upon any theme within the scope of English literature. Indeed, it is only by ignoring the vast voluminosity of learned speculation and ingenious comment that I dare hope to put forward that which alone can excuse my temerity —a new point of view. My point of view is that of the actor, and in this declaration I trust I shall not be held guilty of a too fantastic presumption, for were not Shakespeare and Hamlet both actors? I purpose, then, to approach this most debated of Shakespeare's masterpieces through the despised medium of practical experience—I

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propose, in fact, to attempt to remove the seeming inconsistencies of Hamlet's character with the aid of an actor's prompt copy.

Hamlet is not only literature—it is drama. Hamlet himself is human or he is nothing. It is in the living humanity which animates his whole being that the unequalled attractiveness of this great creation lies. It is because Hamlet is eternally human that the play retains its lasting hold on our sympathies. We are all potential Hamlets.

And who more than the actor, in the white heat of passion, can explore the giddy heights and latent tracts of Shakespeare's masterpiece? He has the privilege—a privilege which alone would make his life an enviable one—of speaking those noble words, of being for the time translated into the higher region of the great poet's greatest imaginings; of soaring on the wings of passion into the rapt heaven of poetic fantasy; of experiencing personally, in the portrayal of Hamlet, his youthful aspirations, his scorn of the insolence of office, and, perchance, his love for the fair Ophelia.

Like all great works, *Hamlet* is distinguished by simplicity; he who will approach this subject with the mind of a child will see clearly—it is only when we look at *Hamlet* as through the blurred

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microscope of super-subtlety that it becomes a nebular hypothesis. It is the first duty of the actor, in his interpretation of the tragedy, to bring home the poet's meaning. Of course, each is bounded by his own personality, by the limitation of his own mental horizon.

The question as to whether Hamlet was mad or feigning madness has vexed the minds and spoilt the tempers of countless writers. They have not the suppleness of mind to understand that a man may have many facets—that he may be everything by turns, and everything sincerely—"A pipe for Fortune's finger to sound what stop she pleases." Here is a young prince of lofty ideals, whose natural refinement of mind has been cultivated at the University of Wittenberg. His sensitive nature shrinks from the contemplation of the boorish court where he is as much out of place as a jewelled ring in a hog's snout. He returns to Denmark to find a riotous rabble merrymaking over the nuptials of his own mother with his father's brother. He sees this hiccoughing monarch sitting on his honoured father's throne, and reeling towards his mother's bed. What wonder that the world seems to him "an unweeded garden that grows to seed, things rank and gross in nature"! Hamlet sickens at the sight—the flood of grief at the loss of his beloved father and of loathing of the fickleness of his mother engulfs, for the moment, his

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tender passion for the fair Ophelia—and he gives vent to his feelings in an outburst on the frailty of woman.

Hamlet learns from Horatio and his companions of the apparition of his father's spirit. His prophetic soul already presages foul play, and through the fog of his suspicions now rises the blood-red sun of revenge. Up to this point Hamlet has been a perfectly sane and rational young man. In the meeting with the Ghost, again, there is nothing abnormal in his attitude—he is overcome with awe on beholding his father's spirit in arms, and is prepared to follow him regardless of perils. In the second Ghost-scene Hamlet is overwhelmed with grief and indignation on learning of the infamy by which his father met his death. To the actor this is a scene of intense and prolonged excitement, more exhausting, because pent up, than perhaps any passage in the whole play. I have sometimes asked myself, with that second consciousness of the actor, whether thus to waste one's vital force could have any compensating effect upon the audience, for Hamlet's eyes are fixed on the Ghost, his face is averted from the public, and probably the actor's excitement is lost upon them. But, nevertheless, I conclude that it is necessary for the actor to undergo this strain of self-excitation in order to reach that condition of hysteria which overcomes

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Hamlet after the Ghost's departure. Here again Hamlet, it seems to me, behaves just as any highly wrought young man would behave on hearing of the terrible fate which had befallen a beloved father. He is all on fire to sweep to his revenge with wings as swift as meditation or the thoughts of love. But the fire is too fierce—it perforce burns itself out. And here the actor should make clear to the audience that physical exhaustion prevents Hamlet from carrying out the impulse of his mind—the weakened physical machine is, as it were, unequal to respond to the promptings of the mind. Hamlet cries:

"O, all you host of heaven! O, earth! what else?
And shall I couple hell?—O, fie! Hold, my heart;
And you, my sinews, grow not instant old,
But bear me stiffly up."

And turning towards the castle where his uncle is still carousing, he continues:

"Oh villain, villain, smiling damned villain."

His passion has reached its climax. He has drawn his sword, it falls back into its scabbard; physical action, the immediate brutal revenge, is abandoned, and Hamlet cries:

"My tables—my tables—meet it is I set it down."

He turns from the sword to the pen, for his is

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essentially the literary mind. His strength is spent; subtlety takes the place of action—the mind is stronger than the body. Here the same symptom is shown as in persons who become lightheaded from physical exhaustion. Hamlet can always, such is the agility of his mind, travesty his own emotions, and in this spirit he jots down on his tablets:

"That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain;
At least, I'm sure, it may be so in Denmark."

This same hysteria continues through the following scene when Hamlet addresses the Ghost:

"Well said, old mole! Can'st work i' the earth so fast?"

The first indication of an apparent aberration of the mind occurs here. Horatio and Marcellus come in search of Hamlet and question him as to his interview with the Ghost. "Oh, wonderful!" says Hamlet.

HOR. Good my lord, tell it.
HAM. (*Suspiciously.*) No; you'll reveal it.
HOR. Not I, my lord, by heaven.
MAR. Nor I, my lord.
HAM. How say you, then; would heart of man once think it?—
But you'll be secret?
HOR. AND MAR. Ay, by heaven, my lord.

Hamlet is now evidently on the point of revealing the purport of the Ghost's message. "There's ne'er a villain dwelling in all Denmark,"

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he begins; then suddenly, his suspicion of Marcellus asserting itself, he adds, "but he's an arrant knave."

He continues to pour out "wild and whirling words," and makes them swear on his sword that they will never reveal the knowledge of what has passed that night. Upon being assured of their secrecy, he tells them clearly that the Ghost is an "honest" one, and then he opens up to them what is in his mind. He may hereafter, for his own purposes, "put on an antic disposition"—that is to say, feign madness in order to be the better able to play the detective, and he enjoins them, by all they hold sacred, not to reveal to any soul that he is thus by diplomacy about to undertake what his physical enterprise shrinks from—the avenging of his father's murder. After reverently apostrophising the dead King's perturbed spirit, he gives his companions the cue to go. Again he feels unequal to the terrible task imposed upon him, and cries:

> "The time is out of joint:—O cursed spite,
> That ever I was born to set it right!"

With his dead father's voice still ringing in his ears, he goes dazed and exhausted from the scene, contemplating, may be, with his mind's eye, the terrible vista of events between him and the goal of destiny.

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In the second act we find Hamlet busy with his scheme of feigning madness, for Ophelia tells her father how Lord Hamlet had come to her in a disordered mental and physical state, and how by his demeanour he had affrighted her. The interview probably took place immediately after Hamlet's meeting with the Ghost. Now this brings us to a consideration as to how far Hamlet's mind was overbalanced by the terrible revelation. Hamlet evidently takes an intellectual and painful delight in exercising his ingenuity and his wit upon the various dupes of his feigned madness. He is, in fact, always an artist—the literary man who makes copy out of his own emotions for his own edification. He vivisects his victims, himself the greatest of these; the exercise proves fatal. But in considering the subject of Hamlet's madness or sanity, let it be borne in mind that never in his soliloquies, and never in his communings with Horatio, does he mutter words of madness. This is my case—the antic disposition is only put on with those whom he does not trust, or with those whom he has an interest in hoodwinking. As presented on the stage, I conceive that Hamlet enters slightly before his cue, detects the King and Polonius in their conspiracy, vanishes for a moment behind the curtains, and then enters stark, staring mad to Polonius.

"Do you know me, my lord?" asks Polonius.

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"Excellent well," replies Hamlet; "you're a fishmonger." In his moods of madness, Hamlet takes pleasure in letting his wit run riot—like a colt in a paddock. On Polonius saying, "My honourable lord, I will most humbly take my leave," Hamlet replies, "You cannot, sir, take from me anything that I will more willingly part withal—except my life, except my life, except my life"—leaping at a bound, such is the versatility of his nature, from the gay to the grave.

In the scene with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who have come to spy upon him, Hamlet receives them with perfect courtesy till his suspicions are aroused. "Beggar that I am, I am even poor in thanks, but I thank you." And here comes a point at which, as I have suggested before, the meaning of the play may be illumined by stage business. Hamlet, in all the frankness of his nature, gives his hand to Rosencrantz. He finds it moist with moisture of nervousness and treachery. He looks into Rosencrantz's eyes, and, reading in them a confirmation of the hand's betrayal, he suddenly asks, "Were you not sent for? Is it your own inclining? Is it a free visitation?" And he wrings from the two confederates a confession of espionage.

Once satisfied of the correctness of his own suspicions, Hamlet again puts on "the antic disposition." "I have of late," he says, "but

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wherefore I know not, lost all my mirth, foregone all custom of exercise; indeed, it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory; this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament—this majestical roof, fretted with golden fire, why it appears no other thing to me but a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours." But here he breaks off, the artist becomes absorbed by his own eloquence rather than with its purpose, and with an enthusiasm very wide from all assumption of madness, he continues with those splendid words beginning, "What a piece of work is man!"

In this scene occurs a passage which seems to me the keystone of Hamlet's character. It is a phrase in which the whole tragedy of his life is bounded as in a nutshell. Hamlet exclaims, "There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so." In these words we find the clue to the failure of many a potentially great man. The man who most succeeds in life is he who only sees one side. The man whose mental horizon is wide, who is capable of seeing the good and evil on both sides, who wanders from the high-road of a fixed purpose into the by-lanes of philosophical contemplation, will not reach his goal so soon as he who only looks straight ahead, and follows the nose of purpose unthinkingly. A demonstration of

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this is contained in the written play of *Hamlet*, which the brief three hours' traffic of the stage prevents being shown in action. I refer to the character of Fortinbras. He sees only one side of things, and knows precisely what he wants. And what is the result? Well, the result is, that when Hamlet is dead, this essentially practical, unimaginative young man comes in, and, in the language of our modern slang, "takes the cake."

Perplexed as he is, Hamlet is only too glad to turn to the players, in order for the moment to divert his mind from the contemplation of the duty which the Ghost has imposed upon him. And he asks them to give him a taste of their quality. But the speech of the actor only serves to remind Hamlet of his dormant duty. And here may be mentioned a bit of by-play, which may serve to emphasise what may have been in Shakespeare's mind. In the course of his recital of Hecuba's woes, the player makes use of the exclamation "mobled Queen." Hamlet repeats the words. This may be the first glimmering of Hamlet's scheme to expose the King through the medium of the play, and with a view to illustrating this, the actor may take out his tablets and reflectively jot down some rough notes. . . . Hamlet is now left alone, and throws himself on a couch. The pent-up stream of hitherto unspoken thoughts is poured forth in torrents of eloquence

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in the speech, "O what a rogue, and peasant slave am I!" It seems to him monstrous that this player should for the imagined wrongs of Hecuba ("What's Hecuba to him or he to Hecuba?") be able to shed tears and to be distracted, while he himself feels impotent to avenge the bloody death of his own father. Here again the artist is paramount. Instead of rushing to the immediate revenge, he chews the cud of his wrath. To illustrate this state of mind, I have introduced the action of Hamlet making sword-thrusts at the empty throne at the words, "Bloody, bawdy villain! O vengeance . . .", Hamlet, in fact, loves to "act," while he shrinks from doing the deed of violence. The actor should suggest that Hamlet has spent his energy in vain unpackings of his heart, and the drawn sword drops by his side, as he cries in the impotence of his despair, "O, what an ass am I! . . ." He turns to the thought of testing the King through the play, and thus excuses himself for his inaction. "The spirit that I have seen may be the devil, . . ," meaning that the Ghost may be an invention of the devil to entrap him into murder, to avenge what may not have been a murder after all! Hamlet will temporise; "I'll have grounds more relative than this," he cries. "The play's the thing wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King." Here, again, the actor may illumine the text with

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illustrative by-play. I have thought it permissible to illustrate the gruesomeness of the situation by making the stage grow gradually dark. The only light comes from a huge fire, and with its aid, Hamlet, kneeling, dashes down on his tablets the lines to be embodied in the murder of Gonzago—the speech through which he hopes to "catch the conscience of the King." This is, of course, a purely pictorial effect.

In Act III. we find the King, the Queen, and Polonius scheming to find out from the fair Ophelia whether Hamlet's madness is due to love or some other cause, and the meeting of Hamlet and Ophelia is pre-arranged by them. Ophelia, unwillingly it may be, consents, and sits down with a book in her hand before the *prie-dieu*. Meanwhile the King and Polonius have concealed themselves, and Hamlet enters with the words, "To be or not to be." From her coign of vantage Ophelia listens to the self-torturings of Hamlet in that great soliloquy wherein he pours out his very heart, and she falls upon her knees praying for her lover. Hamlet's wondrous words may, perhaps, be thought thus to gain an added pathos and significance. Observe here, as in all Hamlet's self-communings throughout the play, that every word uttered by him is sane. In this instance he gives vent to his sighs—as who indeed has not before he reaches

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the middle age of cynicism, and accepts the world at its own valuation? He longs for that sleep of death which shall be the term of all ills; he rails at the oppressor's wrongs, at the insolence of office, as who among us has not railed? And he laments the spurns that patient merit from the unworthy takes. What wonder that a new pity gilds the love of Ophelia? So great is Hamlet's shrinking from the task imposed, that at this moment he contemplates taking his own life in order to avoid taking that of the King. Revenge itself is now sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought. And then again the *leit-motif* rings in our ears—that *motif* which, in considering Hamlet's attitude, I cannot sufficiently insist upon: "There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so." Tempest-tossed, rudderless, anchorless, he stands before the fair Ophelia, the most pitiable figure the mind of man has ever conjured up. And seeking the sympathy of woman—as who has not in such moments?—he exclaims, "Nymph, in thy orisons be all my sins remembered."

We have now come to a scene which has perhaps more than any other vexed the minds of the analytical, but which by the aid of imaginative stage treatment—and let us always remember that *Hamlet* is a stage play—appears to me to have all the clearness of a blue sky. It should be the endeavour of the actor (with the

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aid of such imaginative stage business) to make it so clear. I have taken counsel of many, I have waded through innumerable comments, but the following seems to me a simple exposition of a supposed mystery:

OPH. Good my lord, how does your Honour for this many a day?

HAM. (*Leaving her presence, and with infinite sadness.*) I humbly thank you. Well, well, well.

Ophelia stops him. "My lord, I have remembrances of yours that I have longed to redeliver; I pray you now receive them." From my prompt book I now take the following:—Hamlet looks tenderly at Ophelia, as though on the point of embracing her. But at this moment his hand falls on the medallion containing his father's portrait, which he wears round his neck. He is reminded of the duty imposed upon him—the echo of his father's voice rings in his ears. His duty towards his father is more sacred even than his love for Ophelia. He remembers that oath "to wipe away all trivial fond records," and he at once assumes madness, as with a dazed look he says, "No, not I—I never gave you aught." Of course Hamlet would remember his gifts if he were sane; and his reply is an apparent confirmation of the contention that Hamlet is mad. Assuming him to be sane, the explanation is simple enough. I

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turn to my prompt book and I find this note: Hamlet looks tenderly at Ophelia, as she in words of gentle chiding thus reproaches him:

"My honour'd lord, you know right well you did;
And, with them, words of so sweet breath compos'd
As made the things more rich; their perfume lost,
Take these again; for to the noble mind
Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.
There, my lord."

Hamlet is filled with love and pity for Ophelia. But, to him, all womanhood seems smirched by his mother's act. Has he not exclaimed in the first act, "Frailty, thy name is woman"? Here, it seems to me that the actor may again elucidate what a hasty reading of the text may not make clear. Hamlet, according to my view, takes Ophelia by the hand, and, peering into her face, asks, "Are *you* honest? Are *you* fair?" meaning, is there one woman whom I can trust? "What means your lordship?" Ophelia asks. "That if you be honest and fair, your honesty should admit no discourse to your beauty. . . ." The line, "This was sometime a paradox, but now the time gives it proof," is clearly pointed at the relations between the King and Queen. "I loved you not," says Hamlet, plucking, as it were, his heart from his sleeve. Ophelia sinks upon the couch. "I was the more deceived." Hamlet goes to her. "Get thee to a nunnery," he says, and

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with great tenderness. His meaning is, "Go away from the world. Do not drift about in this relentless sea without the anchor of my love," and he goes on to pour out the confession of his unworthiness, so that she may not grieve for him—"I could accuse me of such things, it were better my mother had not borne me. . . . What should such fellows as I do, crawling between earth and heaven? We are arrant knaves all; believe none of us. Go thy ways to a nunnery."

At this moment Ophelia in her distress has risen. A gust of pity and love surges up in Hamlet's nature. He takes Ophelia in his arms and is about to kiss her, when over her head he sees the forms of Polonius and the King, spying through the arras. "Where is your father?" he asks Ophelia, taking her face between his hands. Ophelia replies, "At home, my lord." Hamlet has trusted Ophelia, and now it seems that she too is false. His soul full of loathing, he flings her from him, crying, "Let the doors be shut upon him that he play the fool nowhere but in his own house. Farewell." Not knowing what is in Hamlet's mind, Ophelia exclaims, "O help him, ye sweet heavens." And then Hamlet pours forth a torrent of words, partly of reproach to Ophelia—words which sear her soul—partly of *pretended madness*, which words are meant for the ears of Polonius and the King, who are watching. "Go to, I'll

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no more on't; it hath made me mad! I say we will have no more marriages. Those that are married already—all but one" (meaning the King) "shall live. The rest shall keep as they are." And with one more wild exclamation of "To a nunnery go!" Hamlet rushes from the room.

I have read that Edmund Kean, in this scene, used to come on the stage again, and after looking at Ophelia with tenderness, would smother her hands with passionate kisses, and rush wildly away. But it seemed to me that the tragedy of the situation lay in the fact that Ophelia goes to her death ignorant of Hamlet's love. And bearing this fact in mind, I have made a variation in the "business"; thus after flinging Ophelia from him and rushing wildly from the room, Hamlet, in a sudden revulsion of feeling, returns. He finds Ophelia kneeling at the couch, sobbing in anguish. Hamlet's first impulse is to console her. But he dare not show his heart. Unobserved, he steals up to her, tenderly kisses one of the tresses of her hair, silently steals from the room, finding his way without his eyes, giving, in one deep sigh, all his love to the winds. Ophelia cries: "O, woe is me, to see what I have seen, see what I see." That noble and most sovereign reason is now to her, like sweet bells jangled, out of tune, and harsh. Hamlet's antic disposition has had its desired effect; for the King and Polonius are now con-

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vinced of his madness, as is shown in an almost immediately succeeding passage in the play:

"Madness in great ones must not unwatched go."

Hamlet now re-enters with the players. Pointing to the manuscript in his hand, he begins:

"Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue."

In this scene Hamlet is again the artist. He instructs the players how to hold the mirror up to nature; and certainly a more sane exposition of the whole duty of the actor cannot be imagined, or a more scathing satire on a deviation from that ideal. The interview concluded, Hamlet is once more seen to be exhausted by his own energy. A sigh escapes him—he sinks into a chair, his head tossed, like a child's, from side to side. But Horatio comes; on him, now that Ophelia is banished, Hamlet leans. In him he recognises a man who has those qualities in which he himself is tragically deficient. Here is a man "whose blood and judgment are so well commingled that they are not a pipe for Fortune's fingers to sound what stop she please." Horatio is indeed the ideal friend. He is the eternal Boswell who understands another's nature by sympathy. And, what an important part in life is played by men of this restful nature! If not great in themselves, they have

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that other attribute of genius of being the cause of greatness in others. Horatio is no courtier. He seeks no flatterers—to him Hamlet can pour out his heart, pour out the heart silenced in that atmosphere of duplicity and self-seeking with which it has been surrounded, an atmosphere which to some natures is the very breath of life.

"Give me that man that is not passion's slave," Hamlet cries, "and I will wear him in my heart's core; aye, in my heart of heart, as I do thee." Then, with a gentle reserve, he adds, "Something too much of this," and returns to his purpose. After stealing up to the arras to see if the King is still hiding, he returns to Horatio, and into the ears of this one friend on whom he can rely, he pours, in brief but vivid words, his scheme for catching the King's conscience. With the very comment of his soul, Horatio is to watch the King's reception of "The Murder of Gonzago." Here is to be a first night which will give the audience pause, unless the Ghost is a damned one, and Hamlet's imaginations, as a consequence, "as foul as Vulcan's stithy." But the festal march heralds the approach of the Court to the play. And here I may mention another instance of stage-management which may make clear a passage that has taxed the ingenuity of some commentators.

"I must be idle," Hamlet cries, and he at

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once puts on his antic disposition. A court jester heads the procession; with him Hamlet converses, and at him he plays the scene which follows. "How fares our cousin Hamlet?" asks the King. "Excellent, i' faith, of the chameleon's dish. I eat the air, promise crammed. You cannot feed capons so," pointing to the cocks-combed jester. The King, surprised, says: "I have nothing to do with this answer, Hamlet; these words are not mine." "No, nor mine now," replies Hamlet, again pointing to the jester. To him also Hamlet addresses his comment on Polonius' announcement, that he had once played Julius Cæsar, and that Brutus had killed him i' the Capitol. "It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf." Here is a minor point, but Hamlet's punning reply would be appreciated by this particular listener, and the touch, light though it be, has been found, I believe, to lend relief and realism to the scene. The succeeding coarse remarks which Hamlet addresses to Ophelia (remarks which have also amazed the erudite from their being obviously foreign to the Prince's noble nature) I conceive to have been directed really to the King's ear. They are, indeed, episodical additions to the scheme of feigned madness. As "The Murder of Gonzago" proceeds, Hamlet, lying at Ophelia's feet, watches the King from behind the manuscript which he holds in his hand, gradually crawling snake-like across the

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stage to the foot of the King's throne. A writer describing Booth's performance at this point, says, "As the mimic murder is accomplished, he springs up with a cry like an avenging spirit. It seems to drive the frightened court before it."

I think that I need not dwell further on the conduct of that great scene of a play within a play, during which Hamlet is irrevocably convinced of his uncle's guilt, a scene which never fails to arouse and arrest the excited attention of an audience, and which leaves Hamlet a prey to the hysteria which culminates in the speech, "Now let the stricken deer go weep," at the end of which he falls sobbing on Horatio's breast. At the entrance of the spy-courtiers, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Hamlet reverts to his antic disposition, trifling away with withering satire the time during which he might be accomplishing his undoing of the King. Polonius enters, and again Hamlet dances on the grave of his own emotion in the exercise of his scathing badinage. The strain of the tragedy through which his mind has passed is too great, and in this revulsion he finds that humorous relief so dear to Shakespeare and to the hearts of audiences at a play. Dismissing the false friends, Hamlet is left alone, and there being no longer any object in assuming madness, he becomes perfectly sane, and recognises the necessity of action.

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Here I have made a new departure from the ordinary acting version of the play. To the soliloquy beginning with the line, "'Tis now the very witching time of night," I have added that other soliloquy of the fourth act, which is, perhaps, the greatest of all of them, and to which, since Shakespeare's days, the walls of the theatre have never or rarely resounded. Those noble lines, "How all occasions do inform against me, and spur my dull revenge" (vividly illustrative as they are of the workings of Hamlet's inner nature, and, therefore, of the highest importance to the play), have been banished from the stage, because they are imprisoned in that episode of the journey to England which cannot be presented from simple lack of time. From that prison I have freed them, by applying them here at a moment of one of Hamlet's self-communings, to which they seem equally applicable. And if the transposition be held to be daring, it may claim the excuse of having been done in the cause of preserving a poetic gem. The concluding words of this speech are: "O from this time forth, my thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth." And to these, in my version, the speech beginning "'Tis now the very witching time of night" is appropriately joined.

Hamlet now starts on his mission to his mother. Again his gentle nature asserts itself, and he kneels

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down to pray to the Virgin: "Let not ever the soul of Nero enter this firm bosom—let me be cruel, not unnatural—I will speak daggers to her, but use none." On his way through one of the winding corridors of the castle, he stumbles upon the very subject of his intended revenge. He finds the King praying. The opportunity so long looked for has come "pat" at last. The soliloquy in which Hamlet's purpose once more dissipates itself has been described by Johnson as "too horrible to be read or to be uttered." Hamlet finds relief in those terrible words. The scene is important, because it so clearly reveals that tenderer side of Hamlet's nature, which makes him seek for any excuse which may postpone the shedding of blood. Once more action is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of philosophy.

In the scene with the Queen, which follows immediately upon this, Hamlet upbraids his mother in such passionate words as to lead her to think he is bent on murdering her. A voice is heard behind the arras; Hamlet rushes up, wildly thrusting his sword through the opening—a dead body falls through the arras. "Is it the King?" asks Hamlet; then, lifting the arras, he finds that Polonius is the victim of his momentary violence. He once more turns to his mother, and in words of passion, in which there is no madness, contrasts the living husband with the dead. "Look here upon

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this picture and on this—the counterfeit presentment of two brothers." There has always been much hot discussion as to whether the pictures should be really shown, or whether they should only be in the mind's eye. Personally, I incline to think that Shakespeare's intention was that miniatures should be used. That they were very generally worn (or rather supposed to be worn) at the period of the play is beyond question, for Hamlet says to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in an earlier scene, speaking of his uncle, "For those that would make mouths at him while my father lived will give twenty, forty, fifty, a hundred ducats a piece for his picture in little." But after all, it is not material to the great issues of the play whether the miniatures or pictures are pointed at, or whether their mention is only symbolical. In a crescendo of passion, Hamlet pours forth reproaches to the Queen, and in the height of his frenzy the Ghost of his dead father enters to whet his son's almost blunted purpose. The sight of the Ghost is not vouchsafed to the mother, who cries, "Alas, he is mad." In the scenes in Act I. the Ghost has appeared to the soldiers as well as to the practical Horatio, and it cannot, therefore, be maintained that the apparition is the creation of Hamlet's disordered brain. Indeed, after the Ghost's disappearance, Hamlet takes pains to undeceive his mother as to his madness,

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telling her that he is not really mad, but only mad in craft, and enjoins her not to let the King suspect his sanity. After counselling the Queen to lead a purer life "with the other half," Hamlet expresses his sorrow at having caused the death of Polonius, and bids his mother good-night, leading her sternly to the *prie-dieu*, at which she kneels sobbing. Hamlet's words are, "I must be cruel only to be kind. Thus bad begins"; then fatefully he adds: "But worse remains behind." And so ends the third act of our acting version.

As Hamlet does not appear in the flesh during Act IV., I need not refer to the events which take place in its course; suffice it to say, that there is nothing which could lead us to a different estimate of Hamlet's mental condition. In Act V. we find the two gravediggers digging Ophelia's grave. The churchyard is, as a rule, made a somewhat gloomy scene, and here I may mention that I have thought fit to change the setting. It is a May-day evening, the sweet-briar is in bloom, the birds are singing, the sheep-bells are tinkling—nature is rejoicing while man is mourning. It has seemed to me that rather than detracting from the tragic events which pass before our eyes, an added emphasis is thus supplied by the heartlessness of nature. Hamlet appears with Horatio, to hear the gravedigger singing a comic song while he is digging the grave; and this gives him an opportunity of

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indulging his passion for idle philosophy. On seeing the skull of Yorick he again gives full rein to his imagination, as he pictures to himself how—

> "Imperious Cæsar, dead, and turned to clay,
> Might stop a hole to keep the wind away."

But his musings are cut short by the approach of the mourning procession. Hamlet is overcome with grief on learning of the fair Ophelia's death. "Forty thousand brothers," he cries, "could not, with all their quantity of love, make up my sum." That Hamlet deeply loved Ophelia is thus shown. And in order to emphasise this side of Hamlet's nature, I have introduced the following effect at the conclusion of the Graveyard scene. Hamlet has departed, followed by the King, Queen, Laertes, and the courtiers. In the church close by, the organ peals out a funeral march. Night is falling, the birds are at rest, Ophelia's grave is deserted. But through the shadows, Hamlet's returning form is seen gathering wild flowers. He is alone with his dead love, and on her he strews the flowers as he falls by her grave in a paroxysm of grief. And so the curtain falls.

The last scene of all which ends this strange eventful history, takes place in the courtyard of the Palace. Hamlet feels the hand of fate upon him—but to him death has lost its terror. "If

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it be now, 'tis not to come. If it be not to come, it will be now—if it be not now, yet it will come," are his words to Horatio. The most determined quibbler could hardly find symptoms of madness in Hamlet's latest utterances. With exquisite grace Hamlet makes his *amende* and his salute to Laertes, and proceeds to play with the foils. Here, in passing, I may touch upon a small point which nevertheless has been much debated—I mean the line "Our son is fat and scant of breath." I take it that Shakespeare wrote "Our son is *faint* and scant of breath," and so it is spoken on our stage. Mark how this reading is borne out by the dialogue as illustrated by stage management.

Hamlet and Laertes have been fencing violently. The King asks that the cup be given him. Hamlet refuses the drink, resumes the fencing, and, for the second time, hits Laertes; somewhat exhausted with the fight, he rests on Horatio's arm. The King cries, "Our son shall win"; the Queen—

> "He's faint, and scant of breath—
> Here, Hamlet, take my napkin; rub thy brows."

The drink is again sent to Hamlet. The Queen goes to him and says, "Come, let us wipe thy face." While Hamlet is recovering, the King and Laertes are afforded an opportunity of their treacherous

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asides. Now, I maintain that this is a perfectly sane interpretation of the scene. There is nothing to indicate that Hamlet was a fat man, and I believe that the word was originally written "faint," but that the "i" and the "n" were somehow dropped out (perhaps they were deleted by a too humorous prompter, Burbage the actor having been a fat man!). Moreover, the business of the scene is exactly that which would apply to a man who was faint—you would give him drink and you would wipe his brows. This, it seems to me, does not apply so well to a man who was suffering from obesity. But let us have done with quibble, for Hamlet is dying, struck by the poisoned sword of treachery; fate enters his soul, and, at last, with the instrument of his own destruction, he kills the King. His last moments are softened by a sweet sanity. To Horatio his dying words are addressed.

> "If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
> Absent thee from felicity awhile,
> And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,
> To tell my story."

Kissing the forehead of his friend, and with his father's picture on his heart, Hamlet says, with his last breath,

> The rest is silence.

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Here as a rule the curtain falls in silence, but I prefer to preserve Horatio's beautiful words:

"Now cracks a noble heart. Good-night, sweet Prince,
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest."

And so, with the faint echo of heavenly music ringing in our ears, the record of Hamlet's storm-toss'd life closes. The worst that can have been done has been done—the carnal, bloody and unnatural acts; the accidental judgments; the deaths put on by cunning and forc'd cause; the purposes mistook fall'n on the inventor's head—all these conspiring agents of an unshunnable destiny have worked their remorseless fill, and the end is serenity and rest at last. Hamlet sleeps, for good or ill—for there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so. It is this refrain which rings once more in our ears as we take leave of the sweet Prince. It is this philosophic doubt which hangs like a miasma over our modern thought, and Hamlet is the most modern of men—he is not only of to-day, he is of the day after to-morrow. The sickness which afflicted Hamlet was what the Germans call *gruebeln*—a kind of intellectual burrowing which has laid many a noble nature low. Thought is the great destroyer. Our fondest teachings crumble in its presence like castles in the air—right and wrong become blurred

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and confused when we reflect that there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.

It has been my aim by the practical assistance of an actor's prompt book to show that Hamlet's supposed madness was a feigned madness, and that many of the difficulties of this Shakespearian masterpiece are really little else than the outcome of a super-acute but unpractical comment. If to the pure all things are pure, to the plain-seekers many things appear plain. And if some of the alleged obscurities of Hamlet may be dispelled by a stage-manager's prompt copy, it should be remembered that Shakespeare was himself a stage-manager. The fact must never be lost sight of that his plays were primarily designed for the stage, and not for the library; that though the greatest of poets, he was an experienced actor as well; and that the prompt copies of his own plays must have been originally filled with stage business in the highest degree illustrative of the text—indeed, it is one of the tragedies of literature that the greater part of them has been lost for ever.

I have done my best to make myself acquainted with the works of the literary commentators.

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I have admired—as who has not?—Goethe's exquisite comparison of Hamlet's nature to an oak-tree planted in a costly vase intended only for love flowers, and Lessing's fine description of the majesty of buried Denmark as "A Ghost before whom the hair stands on end whether it cover a believing or an unbelieving brow"; and Hazlitt's exquisite commentary on the real Hamlet who is in each one of us who has "lost his mirth, though why he know not"; and Klein's delightful ridicule of the German faddists; and Victor Hugo's subtle illustrative quotation from the Prometheus, "That to pretend madness is the secret of the wise." But I still have the temerity to hope that I have been able to throw an added light on Hamlet's difficulties by a more practical medium than metaphysical speculation. I take my stand on the prompt copy. If by the simple application of an actor's experience, I have been able to make Hamlet's attitude in this great play more plain than it has hitherto appeared to many, my labours in what I feel to be a good and a sane cause will not have been in vain.

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Hamlet

AFTER-THOUGHT

In most versions of "Hamlet" the final entry of Fortinbras is omitted owing to the exigencies of time. But much may be urged in favour of the retention of this scene, which illustrates the ascendancy of physical energy over ethical or philosophic inaction. In Mr. Gordon Craig's production of Hamlet *at the Art Theatre in Moscow, which I witnessed recently, I was deeply impressed by the picturesquely valid presentation of this scene. Shakespeare himself frequently dwells on the worldly mastery of matter over mind—witness the triumph of Bolingbroke over Richard II. Hamlet's conscience was his downfall. And here a comparison and a reflection may be allowed me. Hamlet is the very opposite of Iago—of the man, that is to say, who will swim with the stream of a callous utilitarianism rather than struggle against it. Men of the type of Iago are morally colour-blind. They traffic with intrigue. For them this mode of self-advancement has no ugliness. The study of their lives is social success; popularity is their religion. The voice of the people is louder than the voice of God. With them there is no brainsickly misgiving as to the means by which they attain their ends. They go through life, slapping their fellow-men on the back, everywhere making friends, taking care nowhere to make enemies. They are the "jolly good fellows"*

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of a remunerative geniality. The social politician does not waste time in asking himself, "Is this right?" He asks, "Is this expedient?" and he "gets there," as the Americans say. The man with scruples cannot compete with him. Such an one, understanding the world, may say to himself, in weariness, "Is not life too short to circumvent intrigue and chicanery? To attain my ends, must I not make terms with the Mammon of unrighteousness?" And he may go so far as to buckle on his armour to join the noble army of "logrollers," to enlist in the ranks of the great Society of Mutual Protection. It is by such unholy alliances that weak particles make themselves strong. But the inner man, the other sensitive, perhaps weaker self, will blush before the mirror of his conscience; in scorn he will fling aside the armour and spring once more naked into the arena. Cliques are the outcome of the instinct of self-preservation among the weak.

Thus to combine is the shortest cut to fortune. The world was not made for poets and idealists. We are often reminded that to "play the game" is necessary to success in life, and that to be a good diplomatist is of greater importance than to "act well your part." But by such political shifts do men forfeit more than they gain, for when they descend into the arena to mingle with the pimps and panders of party they lose their aloofness of mind, the birdseye view of the philosopher.

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Hamlet

The virginity of a soul cannot be recaptured.
As an obscurist observes:

Act well your part, there all the honour lies;
Stoop to expediency and honour dies.
Many there are that in the race for fame
Lose the great cause to win the little game,
Who pandering to the town's decadent taste,
Barter the precious pearl for gawdy paste,
And leave upon the virgin page of Time
The venom'd trail of iridescent slime.

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SOME INTERESTING FALLACIES OF THE MODERN STAGE

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SOME INTERESTING FALLACIES OF THE MODERN STAGE

1891.

WHEN it was intimated to me that the Playgoers' Club would be glad to devote a Sunday evening to the discussion of a subject which, I am given to understand, engrosses their attention during the other six days of the week, my alacrity to seize the opportunity of appearing in a new character—that of a lecturer—was restrained by the reflection that, in undertaking this task, I might offend the susceptibilities of that class of persons who make a point of never entering the doors of a theatre. Only a few years ago, indeed, such a proposal would have incurred the active enmity of the united phalanx of Puritans and Publicans—that unholy alliance which had so long and so successfully opposed every attempt to banish from our English Sunday the gloom which had come

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to be regarded as its national attribute. Any effort to brighten the lives of those who toil six days in the week, which had been made by the advocates of Sweetness and Light, had been opposed by the apostles of Brimstone and Brandy. Only a few years ago any movement in the direction of what is now regarded as a rational Sunday would have been denounced as little short of a new gunpowder plot to undermine the British Constitution, only to be compared in its anarchy with an organised conspiracy to overthrow the tyranny of the tall hat. And I feel no little pride to think that in casting me for so respectable a part as lecturer this evening you will be able to knock one more nail in the coffin which is being prepared for that gentleman in black beneath whose cassock lurks the apron of the licensed victualler.

Any reform in this direction will only be brought about by individual effort. From politicians we can look for no active help, for both sides unite in bowing their heads to that heathen god, the mighty majority, and any movement to do away with drunkenness by Act of Parliament would be regarded as an interference with the vested interests of the licensed victualler. What indeed is the better part of our modern Socialism but an appeal to the State for protection against the tyranny of Liberal institutions?

I have sometimes noticed, in wandering through

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the streets, evidences of sweetness and light in the windows of the toiling poor, in the shape of a consumptive geranium struggling for supremacy of sunlight with a sickly nasturtium; and I have daily been expecting the establishment of some avenging society for banishing this strange anomaly, this almost impertinent love of colour among the working classes; just as every effort is being made to prevent the Sunday opening of picture galleries, museums, and sacred concerts, which bring into the windows of the souls of the struggling millions those other flowers of the mind, and harmony into the hearts of those "who never sing, but die with all their music in them." I cannot help thinking that these influences are no less humanising than is the godless banging of a "salvation" drum, an exercise which seems to me but an expression of that strange creed, the worship of the ugly, to epidemic outbursts of which the history of this country is no stranger. And it is this devotional cult—the worship of the ugly, in its artistic aspect—that I propose to take as the text of my lecture to-night.

There are two ways of dealing with abuses: either to charge them down with the lance of chivalry, or to bludgeon them with ridicule. Whether we accept the knight-errantry of Don Quixote, or the utilitarian philosophy of his henchman, is a matter of temperament; in a

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public discussion, however, it is perhaps advisable to temper the ardour of the knight-errant with the judicious worldliness of a Sancho Panza, lest in taking our convictions too seriously we should be laughed at for our pains; lest the clumsy heel of scorn should tread on the sensitive toe of flippancy.

If for a moment I should be betrayed into a seriousness, which is no way to behave in the throes of a dying century, I hope that my rapier will be baited with the button of banter, the pangs of vivisection palliated by the chloroform of courtesy, without which the unwritten laws which govern a club would be a hollow mockery, and without which the amenities of modern criticism might degenerate into personalities! Far be it from me to throw into a peaceful and united camp of criticism the apple of discord or the bone of contention. Yet this army, united as it is in one common cause, its holy crusade against the Actor-Manager, is divided into creeds, the one side championing the divine right, the undying laws of an artistic monarchy, the other leaning towards the republic of untrammelled modernity and artistic emancipation. You are all familiar with the old ballad "How happy could I be with either, were t'other dear charmer away." Well, in that attitude of perplexed hesitancy stands the lover of the modern drama.

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I will not call these rival creeds the old school and the new, for it seems to me the Right knows no school. Art is the same in all ages, and Truth is its touchstone. It owes its birth to no canons; on the contrary, these are only discovered at its autopsy. The Venus of Milo, which is ever new, was evolved from no artistic rules—it dictated them. Let us escape from the personal by calling the rival champions Conservatives and Liberals. I was greatly puzzled a short time ago, on being asked by an energetic political agency to fill up in a duly printed form my name, address, and politics. After much self-communion, I arrived at the conclusion that I was an Anti-Gladstonian Socialist, and so I filled up the form. Well, that is very much my attitude in this question of dramatic politics.

And surely, whatever charge may be brought against our English stage, it is not on the score of its lack of catholicity that it can be attacked. In matters of art we are the most cosmopolitan of nations: here the art of every country is received with open arms, whether it be expressed in painting, in music, or in drama. Indeed, we are, if anything, too prone to embrace the foreign—in our cultivation of the exotic orchid, we are apt to overlook our native rose. As exponents of dramatic art, we are accustomed in London

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to receive with hospitality the actors of Italy, of France, of Germany, of America, of Holland —ay, and of Japan. We have listened to the dove-like cooings of a French Lady Macbeth, we have been spellbound by the melodious roar of an Italian Othello, we have admired the inspired gutturals of a Germanic Cæsar. In the matter of stage literature we are no less cosmopolitan. We have been dosed with adaptations of Palais Royal farce, we have sipped the narcotic of Parisian opera bouffe, we have nibbled the olive of French comedy. We have recently turned our attention to the Norwegian realistic drama—the drama of perpetual night. We have watched with a curious scientific interest the unfolding of that strangely narrow, but none the less human, life which Ibsen has laid bare with such unflinching power, with such dexterous butchery. We have there learned that the sordid life of the great civilised towns can be outstripped in its ugliness by the primitive *bourgeoisie* of a Scandinavian village. We have held our nostrils while our gaze has been riveted with wonderment and awe on the crawling brood which the wand of this pitiless magician stirred from the muddy depths, from the fœtid pools, of a sunless, joyless society. We have drunk from the crisp spring of Goethe's Faust and Marguerite. And more recently we have been taught to look for the new light to a young Flemish writer.

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Ever on the alert for a new saviour of the drama, Mr. William Archer, from whom one is not accustomed to superlatives, has embraced Maeterlinck with a fervour compared with which the spiritual exaltation of the discoverer of a new microbe is but a pale and sickly sentiment.

Maeterlinck's published works consist of three pieces. Of these, *Les Aveugles* is a weird *pot-pourri*, which cannot be defined by any terms hitherto known to dramatic literature. As, however, this play contains thirteen characters, of which twelve are blind, it would be superfluous to discuss it as an acting drama, and so we may respectfully relegate it to the bookshelves of literary curios.

L'Intruse, a one-act drama, seems to me as striking in subject as it is original and forcible in treatment, though its merit is perhaps rather literary than dramatic. It might indeed be rendered effective on the stage by a company of sympathetic players, though the suspended agony is perhaps too long drawn out to hold the spectator spellbound throughout. It would be difficult to imagine a more finely wrought-out scene than that describing the intrusion of Death into the sick-chamber. A young mother, who has just passed through her confinement, is lying in the adjoining room; the anxious family is awaiting the visit of a near relative; the conversation is carried on in a hushed tone:

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THE FATHER. You see nothing coming, Ursula?

THE DAUGHTER. Nothing, father.

THE FATHER. Not in the avenue? You can see the avenue?

THE DAUGHTER. Yes, father; the moon is shining, and I can see down the avenue right to the cypress grove.

THE GRANDFATHER [*who is blind*]. And you see no one, Ursula?

THE DAUGHTER. No one, grandfather.

THE UNCLE. Is the night fine?

THE DAUGHTER. Very fine; do you hear the nightingales?

THE UNCLE. Yes, yes.

THE DAUGHTER. A breath of wind is stirring in the avenue.

THE GRANDFATHER. A breath of wind in the avenue, Ursula?

THE DAUGHTER. Yes; the trees are shivering a little.

THE UNCLE. It is strange that my sister is not here yet.

THE GRANDFATHER. I no longer hear the nightingales, Ursula.

THE DAUGHTER. I think some one has entered the garden, grandfather.

THE GRANDFATHER. Who is it?

THE DAUGHTER. I cannot tell; I see no one.

THE UNCLE. There *is* no one.

THE DAUGHTER. There must be some one in the garden: the nightingales ceased singing suddenly.

THE UNCLE. But I hear no footsteps.

THE DAUGHTER. Some one must be passing by the pond, for the swans are frightened.

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THE FATHER. You see no one?

THE DAUGHTER. No one, father.

THE FATHER. Yet the pond must be in the moonlight.

THE DAUGHTER. Yes; I can see that the swans are frightened.

THE UNCLE. I am sure it is my sister that has frightened them. She must have come in by the wicket-gate.

THE FATHER. I cannot understand why the dogs do not bark.

THE DAUGHTER. I see the watch-dog crouched in the inmost corner of his kennel. The swans are flying towards the other bank.

THE UNCLE. They are afraid of my sister. Let me see. [*He calls.*] Sister! sister! Is it you?

[*No one answers.*

THE DAUGHTER. I am sure some one has entered the garden. You will see.

THE UNCLE. But she would answer me!

THE GRANDFATHER. Are not the nightingales beginning to sing again, Ursula?

THE DAUGHTER. I cannot hear one, even in the distance.

THE GRANDFATHER. Yet there is no noise to disturb them.

THE FATHER. The night is silent as death.

THE GRANDFATHER. It must have been some stranger that frightened them; if it had been one of the family they would not have ceased singing.

THE DAUGHTER. I see one on the great weeping willow. He has flown away!

* * * * *

[*Suddenly the sound of the sharpening of a scythe is heard.*]

THE GRANDFATHER [*starting*]. Oh!

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THE UNCLE. Ursula, what is that?

THE DAUGHTER. I cannot tell; I think it is the gardener. I do not see clearly; he is in the shadow of the house.

THE FATHER. It is the gardener going to mow the grass.

THE UNCLE. Does he mow in the dark?

THE FATHER. Is not to-morrow Sunday? Yes, I noticed that the grass around the house was very long.

THE GRANDFATHER. His scythe seems to make such a noise——

THE DAUGHTER. He is moving close to the house.

THE GRANDFATHER. Do you see him, Ursula?

THE DAUGHTER. No, grandfather; he is in the shadow.

THE GRANDFATHER. I am afraid he will awaken my daughter.

THE UNCLE. We can scarcely hear him at all.

THE GRANDFATHER. I hear him as though he were mowing in the house.

The intruder was Death.—Here was a gem, a vivid flash of that imagination which is the most precious ingredient in a work of art. A dramatic author, however, cannot claim to be judged by his one-act efforts; it is his more ambitious works by which he must stand or fall. Of Maeterlinck's works the most ambitious is a five-act tragedy called *La Princesse Maleine*, and it is with this work that I propose to deal chiefly in endeavouring to arrive at an estimate of this author's claims to rank with the highest dramatists.

It should be remembered that this work has

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been described by M. Mirbeau, Maeterlinck's panegyrist, as containing "things more beautiful than the most beautiful things in Shakespeare." One cannot escape the reflection that M. Mirbeau had either not read his Shakespeare, or that he had not read his Maeterlinck. His eulogy of Maeterlinck seems to me indeed a truly Boulevardian conception of greatness. If there be a resemblance between the living and the dead, it seems to me that Maeterlinck is a great deal more like Shakespeare than Shakespeare is like Maeterlinck.

In Act i. of *Princesse Maleine* it is shown how old Hjalmar (king of one part of Holland) has fallen in love with the dethroned Queen Anne of Jutland (a kind of Lady Macbeth). The Princess Maleine (an Ophelia-like maiden) is the daughter of Marcellus (king of another part of Holland), and she in turn is in love with young Hjalmar (son of the old king). To their union, however, Marcellus is strongly opposed, owing to a feud between himself and King Hjalmar. A war ensues between the two kings. Marcellus is killed, and the surrounding villages are in flames. Meantime (we are still in Act i.), young Hjalmar has become betrothed, through the designs of the wicked Queen Anne, to that lady's daughter, Uglyane.

In Act ii. Maleine is wandering with her attendant (like another Rosalind) in the forest, in search of Hjalmar's home. The ladies meet with peasants,

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and one of these (a cowherd, and evidently no gentleman) casually announces his intention of bathing.

The following conversation takes place:

PEASANT. I am going to bathe.
NURSE. To bathe?
PEASANT. Yes; I am going to undress here.
NURSE. Before us?
PEASANT. Yes.
NURSE [*to* MALEINE]. Come away.

This original situation is here interrupted by the entrance of Prince Hjalmar. It is the eve of his nuptials with Uglyane; he (Hjalmar) does not recognise Maleine, but his companion suggests that she would be a good attendant to Uglyane. We subsequently find Maleine waiting upon Uglyane in this capacity. After constant changes of scenery, we are in a park, where Prince Hjalmar has an appointment to meet Uglyane, but Maleine goes in her stead, Hjalmar in the darkness imagining her to be his betrothed. Then ensues a love scene.

The following is a literal translation of one passage:

MALEINE. I am frightened.
HJALMAR. But we are in the park.
MALEINE. Are there walls round the park?
HJALMAR. Yes, there are walls round the park, and moats.
MALEINE. And no one can enter?
HJALMAR. No; but many strange things enter all the same.

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MALEINE. My nose is bleeding!
HJALMAR. Your nose is bleeding?
MALEINE. Yes; where is my handkerchief?
HJALMAR. Let us go to the basin.
MALEINE. Oh! my dress is saturated with blood.
HJALMAR. Uglyane! Uglyane! Has it stopped?
MALEINE. Yes. [*A silence.*

To attempt to criticise a passage so sublime in its banality would be sacrilege. There it must stand, a monument to itself, silencing the commentator, and paralysing the uplifted hand of the iconoclast. The nose-bleeding to which Maeterlinck's heroine is addicted is indeed puzzling to the primitive observer of nature.

The spectator is at once on the alert. Some dramatic development will surely be the outcome of this novel symptom of love. If, for instance, the hero were by these means to track the object of his affections to some lonely spot to which she had been lured by the villain, the expedient of the bleeding nose might not only be commended for its daring, but would have the additional recommendation of sanity. But it is no such vulgar purpose which our latter-day dramatist has in view; he introduces the incident purely for its own sake, and by way of making his heroine consistent in this expression of emotion, the author subjects her, in her death struggles, to the same symptoms, regardless of the physical limitations of his actress. But there is another habit to which Maeter-

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linck's characters appear to be addicted with a startling unanimity. They *will* talk about the weather—indeed, amongst the creations of this author meteorological observations appear to be a very general topic of conversation.

But to return to the play. In Act iii. Hjalmar appears to be again betrothed to Maleine, but the wicked Queen Anne has a perfect passion for poisoning, and we feel that Maleine is not safe. Old King Hjalmar (a sort of unscrupulous King Lear) is beginning to feel uncomfortable at the multitude of crimes into which he is plunged by his designing guest, whose poisoning propensities cause him no little anxiety.

In Act iv. we find that preparations are on foot for the nuptials of Prince Hjalmar and Maleine, and then ensues a scene in which the King and Queen determine to strangle her, the poisoning having failed. There are fine dramatic touches here. The wind is howling, the hail is beating in at the window, while the Queen strangles poor Maleine; at the supreme moment, the grinning face of the Court fool appears at the open window. The King promptly kills this witness of the crime, and the fool falls into the moat below, his dying gurglings being heard through the window. The King is in an agony of terror; Maleine's dog is scratching at the door; then nuns are heard chanting a Latin hymn, but they pass away into the

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distance. A knocking is heard at the locked door —it is the nurse's voice; presently she is joined by Hjalmar. The King and Queen escape from the room by another door, and Hjalmar and the nurse are left outside.

In Act v. the elements play the chief rôle. The old King is dying, and is on the verge of madness. Hjalmar and the nurse discover that Maleine is killed, and seeing the dead fool outside, they imagine that he has done the deed. The King, however, confesses that he and the Queen are the murderers. Hjalmar stabs the Queen, and then kills himself. The King, left behind, demented, asks for salad. He then goes out, leaning on the nurse. This practically ends the play. All the persons leave the stage, with the exception of the seven nuns, who chant a *miserere* while they place the bodies on the bed. The bells leave off tolling; the nightingales are heard; a cock perches at the open window and crows, while the curtain falls. Difficult as it would be to realise to the full the effect of these stage instructions, owing to the limited adaptability of a barn-door fowl to the exigencies of the stage, there is no doubt that the closing scenes breathe a dramatic instinct; indeed, throughout the play we are reminded of this quality. I do not maintain that M. Maeterlinck's work is lacking in fine moments, but that he abounds in very bad quarters of an hour.

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It would indeed be difficult to excel the picturesqueness of certain passages in this play. And it is this quality of picturesqueness which to my mind distinguishes the Belgian author. Our author, however, forgets that the picturesque is not the end and aim of dramatic art, but rather the vehicle to be employed towards that end. Cleverness of technique is too often regarded as the highest aim of art. The great thought, the noble purpose, the poetic thrill, are, according to the fashionable artistic cant, pooh-poohed, to the glorification of cleverness of execution. Thus the pictures of a great imaginative artist are often glibly condemned by those who prefer a cocotte by Van Beers to a Madonna by Watts.

The stage demands a wider sweep of life, a larger range of observation than is suspected by the literary pedant. The drama in neutral tints is an anomaly, and will be to the end of time.

It is maintained by *littérateurs* that the drama is but an offshoot of literature. It might be argued with equal plausibility that literature is an offshoot of the drama. The drama is the most comprehensive of the arts, for it enlists all the other arts in its service—the art of letters, of painting, of dancing, of music, of sculpture, and—the art of advertising. Social politics have almost become

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a necessity of existence. In its most triumphant moments advertising may be defined as the art of imposing on others what you have ceased to believe yourself. It is no secret that there are moments in the career of most actor-managers—ay, even of author-managers—when advertisement helps art over the stile. In a restless paragraphic age, when the silent worker often breaks his heart, let no one look with contempt on this great propelling force; but a force which, like electricity itself, kills in the misapplication. Nor must it be supposed that this art is one of entirely modern growth. There exists a picture of an eminent actor of the last century—published, it is said, during his lifetime—in which he is represented as being wafted by two trumpeting angels to heaven, where Shakespeare, humbly bowing, receives him with doffed hat and "I-hope-I-don't-intrude" expression. Let no man call himself great until he has corrected the proof-sheets of his own obituary notices.

As to this cry for a literary drama, by all means let the drama be literary, but first let it be dramatic. The drama has a literature of its own. Mere fine writing cannot make a good play. It cannot be denied that a certain kind of play has long held the boards which is not intellectual, and which cannot in any sense claim to be literary. This kind of play is fast disappearing from our stage, and its scattered

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remnants will in all probability entirely vanish before the march of free education. People go to the theatre primarily to see play-acting, and the first requirement of a play is that it shall be actable —that it shall, in fact, be dramatic. Many an unliterary play has been saved by good acting, but no bad acting can be saved by good literature. It may be frankly admitted that many an indifferent work has met with success. But when I hear all this outcry against those in office by those who are not, I cheerfully reply: "Where is the play produced in recent years which has failed from being too good? Where is the play which has failed because it was good literature?" There have, of course, been plays of fine literary flavour which have given their author many months of fruitless toil; but if we look carefully we shall find the little rift somewhere, just as the most skilful bell-founder may find his bell cracked and his music mute. In such plays we find the sympathy misplaced; the centre of gravity has somehow been dislodged. And it is precisely this nice adjustment of sympathy, this instinctive dramatic poise, this sublime humour, which in the dramatist we call genius. A microscopic examination may reveal the most perfect workmanship—the most accurate drawing. But stand back from the picture, subject it to the larger perspective of the stage, the work fails to satisfy, its defects become apparent—the

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heart-beats of a multitude have felt its unhumanity. The play was literary—it was not dramatic. Rail at it as you will, the first merit of a play is that it shall satisfy the artistic conscience of an audience. By the blessed re-adjustment of the laws of copyright there still remains this comfort to a disappointed author, he can print his play, he can send it to his friends, and he can append a footnote to the effect that it was too good for the public. Does an audience disenjoy *The School for Scandal* because it is literary? No; but that wondrous comedy would not have had its abiding hold over each succeeding generation had it not possessed a story which appealed to the heart—a plot that engaged the sympathies of the spectators. It is a matter for congratulation, for which the dramatic Liberals, or advanced school, are in no small measure responsible, that nowadays plays are produced and listened to with respect which only a few years ago it would have been little short of madness to put upon the stage. The drama covers a wider area of life. W. S. Gilbert's young lady of fifteen is growing up.

What I maintain is, that the work of exotic writers will not hold a permanent place upon our stage, for, interesting though it be, it can only be a transient phase. It cannot be expected to take its place as a permanent and native growth. It serves, however, as an admirable manure for the

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future, a dunghill from which many a fair flower of the drama may bloom.

Far be it from me to depreciate the admirable influence which the exploitation of foreign works has exercised, and will continue to exercise, over our own theatre. Far be it from me to belittle the service which certain writers have rendered our contemporary stage in clamouring for a wider field of action, for a more realistic dramatic literature. We should applaud their enthusiasm, even if we think it exaggerated and at times misplaced.

Nor should we forget to-day the work of those other enthusiasts who stood by the drama in its period of storm and stress, who upheld its dignity, and untiringly advocated its claims to take a high place among the arts. To these our dramatists owe no small debt of gratitude, while the beneficial influence they exercised over the acting of our time is equally not to be forgotten. Who shall deny the impetus which histrionic art received from them, not only by public encouragement, but no less by unflinching and persistent criticism? At a time of artistic lethargy into which our stage had fallen, it was roused into healthy action by the rivalry with foreign actors, whose superiority was proclaimed persistently by these writers. In our hurry to upset what we consider the canons of convention, let us beware lest we set up the canons of anarchy.

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For my own part I view these heated discussions with satisfaction. I regard these volcanic mutterings as a sign of latent fire. It is only by strife that great things are accomplished. For in our lesser world, as in the larger universe, "all subsists by elemental strife, and passions are the elements of life."

Nor is it from want of recruits that the drama can be said to be languishing. One of the most interesting hallucinations to which the human species of both sexes is prone, is the conviction that anyone can act and that everyone can write a play. That is a fallacy. A short time ago I received a letter informing me that the writer was a house decorator by trade, but that as circumstances over which he had no control had recently subjected him to epileptic fits, he would be glad to take a part in my next production. He added that he had a strong taste for the literary drama, of which indeed he had several samples on hand. The letter concluded thus: "To prove to you that I am not lacking in dramatic instinct, I enclose a newspaper cutting, which please return." Underlined in red ink I read these words: "The prisoner, who denied the assault, conducted his own case, and defended himself in a *somewhat dramatic manner*."

It is no longer the fashion for the cultivated and

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fastidious to hold aloof from the theatre, and "quite superior persons" do not deny the soft impeachment of flirting with the Muse. Thanks, indeed, to the platonic but enervating blandishments of dilettante patrons of the stage, the drama runs the danger of being refined away until it reaches its apex in a vanishing point.

There is a certain kind of literary dandy who would banish all that is healthy, all that is beautiful from the stage, and substitute in their place that kind of art which is the outcome of an over-sated civilisation, an art which finds a parallel expression in those weirdly stomachic examples of Japanese art which leer at us through the shop windows of Regent Street. It is not from the ranks of these that the drama will be vitalised. These lisping Rabelaisians, mistaking indecency for passion, lash themselves into a state of impotent frenzy, and, with an ardour which is almost alcoholic, sip their inspiration from the pellucid depths of a lemon-squash.

If it be indeed the function of art to give us nature in all its crudeness, the accidental truth of the reporter rather than the greater truth of the poet, then it is obvious that the theatre is but an excrescence on our social system. For we can find our romances free of charge in the law courts, we can look for our love stories in the columns of the *Illustrated Police News*, for our philosophy in the

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gutter, for our heroism in a street brawl, and we can exercise our tragic emotions in the precincts of the Morgue or in the wards of a hospital. If I may take as an illustration a play that was recently produced, it seemed to me that *Thérèse Raquin* was the work of an impassioned photographer rather than that of an imaginative artist. I confess to being attracted by this morbid play, but how much wider would have been the sphere of its influence if with the woof of realism the golden thread of poetic imagination had been intertwined! I believe that such works serve their purpose in literature, as recording the impressions of a certain society on the mind of a great writer. I deny that the stage is the most suitable vehicle for their exhibition. This striking drama is a modernised version of *Macbeth*. But mark the difference of treatment. In the one the highest emotions are stirred; in the other we are assisting at a post-mortem examination. One man will paint blood trickling down marble steps in such a way as to make one exclaim "Ah!" Another in such a way as to make one exclaim "Ugh!"

We have heard a good deal about an Independent Theatre, which was established, I understand, for the purpose of sweeping from the stage that usurping intruder the actor-manager, to whose baneful and withering influence have been attributed all

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the ills which dramatic flesh is heir to. What has been the outcome of this agitation? What has become of the maternal Muse, so pregnant in promise, so abortive in performance? What has been the output of this magnificent machinery? In his mind's eye the patentee of this artistic Utopia saw the little dramatic fledglings nestling fondly round their parent incubator. Everything was perfect—only the eggs were missing; or at least they were what the late Mr. Middlewick used to call "shop 'uns." An ingenious analyst will be able to produce an oval-shaped something which shall contain all the chemical properties of an egg. He may sit on his egg till Doomsday, but he will never hatch it.

Again, we heard lately of the admirable intentions of a London manager, who announced his policy of setting aside one evening in the week for productions other than the piece then running. By these means the manager thought that he would be able to produce the works of hitherto unknown authors. But what was the result? Somehow the scheme did not work. True it is that several interesting revivals took place, and one piece, the merits and demerits of which were somewhat hotly discussed over the prostrate body of the manager, was produced. But the scheme did not meet with much encouragement from the press, who promptly satirised it as quixotic, and

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dubbed these special evenings "Unpopular Mondays." I am told that the manager diplomatically attributed the cessation of this ambitious enterprise to failing health. Strange that such a "very fiery particle should let itself be snuffed out by an article!"

It would be idle to deny that the system of long runs is, in some of its aspects, detrimental to the best interests of art; though we must not forget, even on this point, that the assurance of a sustained run has enabled both manager and actor to bestow upon their work a measure of care and refinement which is not possible under the conditions of a constantly shifting programme. A manager is, alas! bound to keep one eye on his exchequer, and the exchequer demands that a successful play shall run its course. It happens sometimes that, in his attempt to evade the quicksands of the Bankruptcy Court, the manager perishes in the stagnant waters of commercialism. It is obvious that it is desirable that a manager should be freed from these sordid considerations, and I believe that in almost every country but England the theatres are State-subventioned. It is an open question, however, in a country in which individualism in all departments has taken strong root, and where State encouragement or interference is looked upon askance—whether a national or subsidised theatre would be for the ultimate benefit

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of the community. Personally, I incline to the belief that any drawbacks of a subsidised system would be greatly outweighed by its benefits. It must be confessed, on the other hand, that experiences in France and other countries do not tend to show that the State-subsidised theatres are in touch with the age; indeed, the State machinery is liable to have grown somewhat rusty.

In the absence of conditions which are not likely to prevail here, to whom, then, can we turn for the advance of those interests which all of us have at heart? It seems to be taken for granted that the artist is the one person who is indifferent to the claims of his art. With a lofty disregard of history, certain writers are never tired of dinning into the ears of the public this remarkable paradox, hallowed only by print. It must be confessed that the public on their part show no inclination to prefer the claims of the commercial or the literary-scientific manager, who are patiently waiting their turn, while the storm rages fiercely round the actor-manager, who stands amid it all, immovable as the Pyramids, as imperturbable as a perennial "Aunt Sally."

We are told by some that the drama is moribund. We are told that enthusiasm is dead, and artistic enterprise an affair of £ s. d. I am so

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bold as to contend that there never was a time when our art exercised a greater sway over the public; there never was a time when literature devoted itself with greater zeal to its discussion; there never was a time of greater artistic striving than the present. And I am yet bolder in affirming that the best work which has been done for our art in the past has been done by men in my own position. If it is well to be modest about oneself, it is permitted to be proud of one's comrades; and I confidently maintain, in asking you to glance back at the record of the past, that it is the workers in our own, as in all other arts, who have at all times upheld its best interests, its fair fame, its highest ideals. Not to go farther back, the memory of many who are here to-night will supply the names of those who have been illustrious in the advancement of our art during the last fifty years. Among such names are those of William Charles Macready, Charles Kean, Phelps, Henry Irving, Bancroft, and John Hare. And I am still so bold as to predict that the examples set by these men will be followed by their successors in art. If their enthusiasm lag, then let others come on and take up the standard; the fittest will survive. The field is open to all, for happily art knows no vested interests. It is but beating the air to rail at the star-system, for that system is based upon a law of nature—the happy inequality of

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man. Is not all humanity run upon the star-system?

I maintain that it is a fallacy to suppose that those eternal conditions which have governed art can be upset, any more than can those which have governed nature. So long as men are men and women are women, so long will they look to art to hold up to them that flattering mirror in which they can see themselves idealised. In an age when faith is tinged with philosophic doubt, when love is regarded as but a spasm of the nervous system, and joy itself but as the refrain of a music-hall song, I believe that it is still the function of art to give us light rather than darkness. Its teaching should not be to taunt us with our descent from the monkeys, but rather to remind us of our affinity with the angels. Its mission is not to lead us through the fogs of doubt into the bogs of despair, but rather to point, even in the twilight of a waning century, to the greater light beyond.

AFTER-THOUGHT

We live to learn and learn to live.

It would be a pity if age did not ripen judgment and broaden sympathy. The mind even of an

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actor-manager progresses, though he may haply retain an undiminished faculty of provoking the critics, as must all vital art. Mediocrity makes us wondrous kind!

This essay seems to me now to contain certain harshnesses of expression in regard to a writer whose later work inspires a whole-hearted admiration. Or is it that the genius of Maeterlinck has emerged from its tentative endeavour into a larger area of accomplishment, and soared into a wider realm of imagination? Be that as it may, I am content to let the written word stand, and I cannot do better than shelter myself behind the dictum of an eminent modern writer:

"Not that I agree with everything that I have said in this essay—there is much with which I entirely disagree. The essay simply represents an artistic standpoint, and in æsthetic criticism attitude is everything."

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THE HUMANITY OF SHAKESPEARE

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THE HUMANITY of SHAKESPEARE

1904.

IMAGINATION, observation, poetry, passion, humour—all these are Shakespeare's in supreme degree—we are dazed as we look at them, rising like mountains from the common ground; but the highest peak of all, that which is the first to be touched by the morning sun and the last to retain its setting glory, is his radiant humanity. His is the supreme gift of viewing human nature from the heights, of discerning the reality of things below, and of dealing with them in that serene spirit of tolerance which is the attribute only of the great few—the master-poets of the world have drunk deep from that Olympian spring.

Shakespeare never strikes the note of a self-conscious moralist—indeed, it is often difficult to determine where his sympathies are. In this impersonality—this impartiality of mind—he stands

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almost apart. He never holds a brief for his characters, labelling this one good and that one bad, this one penny plain, and that one twopence coloured; he is the judge, not the advocate, allowing each character to develop his own case, leaving the jury of mankind to draw their conclusions. He dwells for the time being in the minds of the men he is portraying, revealing the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth of their natures—extenuating nothing, nor setting down aught in malice. His heroes have their weaknesses—his weak men their heroisms. He does not hesitate to afflict the noble character of the Moor with a foolish and unreasoning jealousy—he appears even to have a sort of intellectual sympathy with the dastard Iago. Like Rembrandt, he is the supreme artist who will paint with equal zest the front of Jove himself or the carcase of a bullock. He does not scruple to afflict the beautiful nature of Hamlet with unmanly hesitancy, with a corroding and disintegrating philosophy which drives that versatile prince to the admission that "There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so." It was this little rift within the frail and delicate lute of Hamlet's character which was fated to make his music mute. We cannot all be given the sturdy virtues of the trombone. On the other hand, he is not only serenely tolerant of, but he even appears

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to regard with a feeling akin to affection, the concave character of Falstaff; and assuredly no two characters could be more opposite than are those of the sweet Prince and that incarnation of wallowing selfishness, that immortal creation of the poet's passionate humour, the fat knight. How opposite are their points of view of life and death, and of honour! And yet no one but he who wrote the "To be or not to be" speech, or that other speech on honour in *Hamlet*, could have given us Falstaff's speech on honour in *Henry IV*. Listen to the words of Hamlet:

"How all occasions do inform against me,
And spur my dull revenge! What is a man
If his chief good and market of his time
Be but to sleep and feed? A beast—no more.
Sure he that made us with such large discourse
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and godlike reason
To fust in us unus'd. Now, whether it be
Bestial oblivion or some craven scruple
Of thinking too precisely on the event,
A thought which, quarter'd, hath but one part wisdom
And ever three parts coward,—I do not know
Why yet I live to say 'This thing's to do.'

* * * * *

. . . . Rightly to be great
Is not to stir without great argument,
But greatly to find quarrel in a straw
When honour's at the stake.
. . . . O! from this time forth
My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth!"

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Turn to the speech of Falstaff before the battle—

FALSTAFF: Hal, if thou see me down in the battle, and bestride me, so; 'tis a point of friendship.

PRINCE: Nothing but a colossus can do thee that friendship. Say thy prayers, and farewell.

FALSTAFF: I would it were bed-time, Hal, and all well.

PRINCE: Why, thou owest God a death. [*Exit.*]

FALSTAFF: 'Tis not due yet; I would be loth to pay him before his day. What need I be so forward with him that calls not on me? Well, 'tis no matter; honour pricks me on. Yea, but how if honour prick me off when I come on? How then? Can honour set-to a leg? No. Or an arm? No. Or take away the grief of a wound? No. Honour hath no skill in surgery, then? No. What is honour? A word. What is that word honour? Air. A trim reckoning. Who hath it? He that died o' Wednesday. Doth he feel it? No. Doth he hear it? No. Is it insensible, then? Yea, to the dead. But will it live with the living? No. Why? Detraction will not suffer it. Therefore I'll none of it. Honour is a mere scutcheon—and so ends my catechism.

Turn to Marc Antony in *Julius Cæsar*. How serenely relentless was his observation of humanity in dealing with this motley crowd! Marc Antony has the complex nature of a man, and is not merely a stage figure. Though a hero he does not disdain to stoop to subterfuge to gain his end, and plays upon the unwashed mob as a great composer sways and dominates, flatters and cajoles, bullies

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and inspires an orchestra. Brutus, too, is he a hero? No—though noble in utterance, he is the self-deceiving politician. There have been many such, who, to gain their ends, persuade themselves that their means are honest—that they themselves are sincere. Brutus kills Cæsar—for the good of the cause, from his point of view. Antony revenges his death—for the good of the cause, from his point of view. Shakespeare remains the apologist of both. Was Cæsar right? Was Brutus right? Was Cassius right? Was Marc Antony right? Where is Shakespeare's sympathy? Everywhere —nowhere—he holds the scales of justice, mysterious, elusive, impartial, inscrutable, seeing "with equal eye as God of all, a hero perish or a sparrow fall."

Take Shylock. Most people appear to think that Shylock must either be a demon or a saviour. He is, in truth, a mixture of both—the man—the Jew! But mark the serene impartiality wherewith Shakespeare sits in judgment on the soul of Shylock! He presents in him the vices as well as the virtues of his race. Domesticity is one of the Hebraic virtues. The love of his daughter commends him to our sympathies—anon his vengeful and cruel nature commands our censure. It is, therefore, ridiculous to present Shylock as a merely sympathetic character. Of course, the culmination of suffering creates sympathy with any man,

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and, while laughing at his pretensions, we weep at his griefs. There can be no doubt that at the time Shakespeare wrote *The Merchant of Venice* the Jews were not regarded with high favour, and Shylock's first speech shows him informed by the spirit of revenge. I do not deny that Shylock had just cause to be angry, and it has been said that revenge is a primitive form of justice. But just when we begin to think that Shylock is becoming the martyr-hero of the play, and that all our sympathies are meant for him, Shakespeare, the altruist, enters upon the scene, and gives us the immortal speech on the quality of mercy, which, bursting the walls of the narrow court, preaches to humanity the eternal message of Christian forgiveness. Here is put in consummate fashion the tragedy of a people's oppression; then the whole ancient Jewish wisdom is shattered, flung down, a thing outworn, rent to pieces by the mightier wisdom of the greatest of all the Jews.

Glance at Richard II. He is as many-sided as the other great creations of the poet. What is to be said of that strange mixture of power and feebleness, of nobility and apathy, of courage and irresolution, of indolence and energy? The poet gives us the clue to the enigma in his presentation of the character of this spoilt child of fortune, and informs us more by the enlightening magic of his genius than does the historian by a record of

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dry facts. It may well be imagined that the tragic figure of Richard served the poet as a model for the development of the character of Hamlet, with whom the ill-fated King has many points of resemblance. In both instances we have the spectacle of a young prince thrown into surroundings of barbarism and corruption, both incapable of grappling with the stern facts of life. In each case the idealist succumbs to the materialist—the man of action. Each in his way laments the futility of his existence. Hamlet on the immortality of his soul, Richard on the divine rights of kings—each seems to breathe that sad and fantastic irony which is so dominant a note in the poet's mind.

In the beginning of the play, when the two appellants come before him, Richard exhibits that princely confidence which had already enabled him to quell the followers of Wat Tyler, and to raise in his people those high hopes for a great future which were never to be realised. Again, in the lists at Coventry, when he stops the intended fight, and there and then banishes both combatants, he comes forth as a strong, quick, and resourceful statesman. But, later, at the bedside of his dying uncle his bearing is harsh and unfeeling, completely overshadowing the good qualities he had shown before. Furthermore, on the return of Bolingbroke a few months afterwards, when the

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unhappy king is deserted by his subjects, Shakespeare reveals him in the throes of an exaggerated and over-indulgent self-pity. The passionate, wayward artistic nature that before made him overbearing and imperious, turns him now into an effeminate and self-compassionate creature. There are occasional rallies of wit and spirit, but the poet shows them as mere flickers flaming up out of the darkness of his despair. Then, just as we are feeling contempt for the man, the humanity of Shakespeare bursts through again, and, in the scene of the surrender of his crown, compels us to acknowledge in this complex character a distinct nobleness and pathos—this, possibly, to prepare us for the death of Richard in prison, where we are given a remnant of his old bearing, though tempered by repentance and resignation.

Take again the development of the characters of King Lear, of Macbeth, and of King John. None of these is a hero in the conventional sense of the word. In themselves, they do not call forth our sympathies. It is their humanity thrown athwart the tragic incidents of their lives which gradually awakens in us emotions culminating in a climactic agony of grief.

Let us now pass from the contemplation of Shakespeare's work to a consideration of the treatment which his interpreters should devote to that

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work in order to bring home to the spectator the true meaning of the poet. And here it is the actor's highest aim to give that note of humanity which makes the whole world kin.

It is the fashion to say that the mounting of Shakespeare is the main consideration the modern actor-manager has in view. That is all nonsense. These are the outward flourishes and not the essentials. It was once thought necessary that the actor should put on stilts in order to reach the Shakespearian height. No author demands a more natural, a more sincere, a more human treatment at the hands of the actor than does Shakespeare. He, being the most modern of writers, demands the most modern treatment. He is not of yesterday nor to-day—he is of yesterday and to-day and to-morrow and the day after to-morrow. The actor's own humanity—that is the all-important question. How far is he to allow that to be infused with the character he is called upon to represent? Certain it is that whilst the actor's outer self-suppression is amongst the most essential factors of success in his art, so also are his own individuality, his own personality, his own humanity all-important.

You cannot imagine a characterless person playing the great characters of Shakespeare. You say, "Oh, it doesn't matter—Shakespeare has taken care of all that." Yes, but it requires

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individuality to interpret individuality—power, force, character, to realise the creations of the master brain. Nothing else than the actor's individuality will make the humanity of these characters stand out sharp and clear from the mass of humanities grouped about it and behind it.

I was once walking along the sea-shore of a great northern city at close of day, and, casting my eyes inland, I was impressed by the superb manner in which the splendid granite towers and spires outlined themselves clear-cut against the crimson of the sunset sky. Behind them stood a mass of grey, indeterminate masonry, vague and menacing, pallid and indistinguishable; but they themselves, those lofty spires tapering into the azure of heaven, those embattled towers square and massive, how superbly they reared themselves aloft and above the surging world beneath them! So, I thought to myself, is it with the great characters of Shakespeare. They are outlined for all time, they stand as memorials of humanity for ever. But how is the actor to give life to these creations? How infuse into them the vitality by which only they can be brought into touch with the present day? And the answer surely is, that he must infuse them with his own individuality. Initiative—like "Mesopotamia"—is a blessed word in the hands of the discreet man.

Consider what an impossible condition of

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things it would be if everybody played Hamlet, Macbeth, Malvolio, or Shylock on the same pattern —Smith playing it like Robinson, and Brown like both of them. Or picture to yourselves how absurd it would be if a man played all those four characters in the same way, the words only denoting the difference. No; an actor, if he is to be in any way understood or make his character understood, must infuse into his reading of Hamlet, Macbeth, Malvolio, or Shylock his own humanity, his own individuality, his own personality; for it is his personality that accentuates, that brings out the personality of the character he is portraying. And the more widely that three or four different actors of strong character differ in their respective readings of a part, the more is it a proof of its own inherent humanness, the more is it obvious that it is possessed of a wide human nature. As to how far he is to bring his own humanity to bear upon that of Shakespeare is a matter that can be safely left to the wit and discretion of an originally-minded man. After all, the same applies to literature. A good writer always puts a great deal of himself into his varied characters—for, be sure of this, you cannot guess at human nature. To make a mark upon the literature of your day, or of any day, you can only write from your own personal experience, observation, or instinct; and the greatest

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of these is instinct, for instinct is the knowledge supplied by heredity. Some men are born educated—some are not. It is not less so with the actor. He cannot take cock-shies at humanity. Human nature is, after all, the most modern thing we know, and it is the most ancient. But one thing is certain—it is never outworn, never out of the fashion. Empires and principalities, nations and institutions fade away; but humanity remains to-day exactly as it was, in all essentials, a hundred thousand years ago—as it will be a hundred thousand years hence. Do you know that wonderful crouching figure in the British Museum, the Stone-Age man, discovered in Egypt—a man who lived any time between twenty and fifty thousand years ago? You see his bones, his muscles, even the very hair of his face. He seems so long ago, and yet he is, after all, one of ourselves. He might have been Hamlet, or Napoleon, or Macbeth, or Herbert Spencer. He is eternal; and they are eternal, for humanity is eternal. Human nature is informed by the same passions, the same joys, the same griefs, the same humour—and in proportion as the interpreter informs his conceptions of Shakespeare with his own humanity, so will his work stand out clear and vivid upon the stage.

How vast is the story of humanity writ in the brain of the greatest thinker mankind has ever produced. By the light of the wide tolerance of

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his spacious day, we feel how thin are the barriers of caste, how puny are our social bickerings, what a little thing is mere pleasure as compared with the large happiness of mankind. A shilling will bring happiness to the humblest understander of Shakespeare, and, for the nonce, he will mix with emperors, philosophers, princes, and wits—on equal terms, for Shakespeare's humanity is every man's. That is his title to immortality. His wide spirit will outlive the mere letter of narrow doctrines, and his winged words, vibrant with the music of the larger religion of humanity, will go thrilling down the ages, while dogmas die and creeds crumble in the dust.

AFTER-THOUGHT

In saying that only he who wrote the speech of Hamlet beginning "To be or not to be" could have written Falstaff's speech on Honour before battle, I am tempted to relate what I think was a true word spoken in humour—and nothing can point a truth so well as humour!

Some time ago I was requested to have my voice recorded for the British Museum, and the choice for the purpose fell upon the two speeches above-mentioned

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—in the respective voices of Hamlet and Falstaff. Those gramophone records now reside in the archives of the British Museum. In an expansive moment I once related (this was, of course, purely fictional) that so nervous was I, feeling myself in the presence of posterity, that I spoke the speech of Hamlet in the voice of Falstaff and that of Falstaff in the voice of Hamlet; and I thus made the interesting discovery that Hamlet and Falstaff were one and the same person—they were in fact Shakespeare! If the reader will turn to Falstaff's speech on Honour quoted in this essay, and will read it with the voice or with the eyes of Hamlet, he will find that these identical words might have been spoken by him to his friend Horatio, as they were in fact spoken by the fat knight to Prince Hal; they are equally appropriate to the gentle humour of the sweet Prince as they are in the mouth of the philosophic sensualist.

Turn again to the speech beginning "To be or not to be," and you may imagine the prototype of Falstaff sitting in the Mermaid Tavern speaking the lines on the Immortality of the Soul to his boon companions. You can imagine Shakespeare himself sitting in an ingle nook listening to the words of wisdom uttered by this stricken idealist, this boulting hutch of beastliness, and taking them down in shorthand to give to the actor who first played Hamlet.

And here another After-thought springs to my mind. I have referred in an earlier essay ("Our Betters") to

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the strange vicissitudes of the English tongue which changes in each generation. Why should not the gramophone, like the cinematograph, be used for educational purposes? Why should it not be used to perpetuate for future generations a standard pronunciation of the English language? There is at present practically no law but that of fleeting custom as a guide to pronunciation. A Committee might be formed to decide on some universal approved method of preserving the language in its strength and purity. What would we not give to-day if we could hear on this gramophone the voice of Elizabeth and of Shakespeare! How did Cæsar pronounce Latin? How did Sophocles speak Greek?

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THE TEMPEST IN A TEACUP

A PERSONAL EXPLANATION

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THE TEMPEST IN A TEACUP

1904.

THE question whether the works of Shakespeare, and *The Tempest* in particular, should or should not be represented on the stage, is one which has of late been debated with considerable vehemence. The negative point of view is open to argument, although it is obviously a point of view not shared by Shakespeare. Nor do I propose to tread such debatable ground. It is rather my purpose to deal with the more practical question of the *manner* in which the poet's work should be produced.

Of all Shakespeare's works *The Tempest* is probably the one which most demands the aids of modern stage-craft. But to the super-subtle nothing is so baffling as the obvious.

My efforts to present this fantasy were widely and generously recognised by men of letters and by the public at large; they also called forth the wrath of others, whose vituperation, I prefer to think, was not due to a desire to baulk high

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endeavour, but rather to an honest ignorance of the text of the play, and to a whole-hearted incapacity to appreciate the spirit of the poet. To the prosaic nothing is so embarrassing as the poetic.

My contention is that unless *The Tempest* be produced in such a way as to bring home to audiences the fantasy and the beauties of the play it were better not to attempt it at all. The question is: Can that fantasy and those beauties be conveyed to the senses of an audience by means of what is called "adequate" treatment? I say No. And I further contend that it is far more satisfactory to read the play in the study than to see it presented in the archaic and echoic methods so dear to epicures in mediocrity. Indeed, if so presented, the public would stay away, and the public would be right, for the illusion of the spectator would be dulled rather than quickened by such a presentation. Illusion is the whole business of the theatre. Treatment, I hold, is essential to the proper comprehension of Shakespeare on the stage, and nowhere, I think, is this more evident than in the case of *The Tempest*. This fact was recognised by the late Charles Kean, who gave to the public an elaborate and beautiful production of this fairy-play. The wits of the period spoke of that distinguished and enthusiastic artist as an "upholsterer," a "spectacle-maker," and a "poodle-trimmer"!

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Since that time the science of invective appears to have made considerable strides.

A nameless writer in *Blackwood's Magazine* made the broad statement that Shakespeare's plays "afford no decent opportunity for elaborate scenery." If ever there were an author whose plays do lend themselves to elaborate stage treatment, that author is assuredly Shakespeare. None, indeed, is so rich in scenic suggestion, and it can scarcely be denied that his works were primarily intended for the theatre, nor that the theatre is primarily intended for theatre-goers. The bookworm has always his book.

The nameless writer further said that "it should be impossible to turn them (the plays) *to the vulgar use of stage illusion.*" And this is written of an art which is the art of illusion—this is written of the work of a man who was an actor and a playwright!

It may be broadly laid down that whatever tends to quicken the imagination of the audience —in fact, to create illusion—is justifiable on the stage. Whatever detracts from the appreciation of the author's work and disturbs the illusion is to be deprecated—is, in fact, bad art. The measure of success or failure must be left to the judgment of each individual. It is a question of taste on the part of the artist who presents the play, and a question of receptiveness on the part

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of the spectator. There are those who see nothing but scenery—who hear nothing but the carpenter's hammer—but what else should they see? What else should they hear? When Caliban hears sounds and sweet music in the air and sees riches in the clouds, the drunken butler and the chartered fool split their sides with ironic laughter.

Our nameless writer waxed fervid in his denunciation: "No intelligent actor would ever bring the poet's masterpieces under a mass of irrelevant scenery" (*sic*). Our writer also grew highly indignant with the playing of *The Tempest* in three acts instead of five, ignoring the fact that this arrangement comes much nearer to the system which prevailed in Shakespeare's own time, when scenes and acts followed each other in swift succession. All Shakespeare's plays have to undergo a certain amount of abbreviation to bring them within the time-limit demanded by modern audiences, and indeed there is every reason to believe that these plays were considerably "cut" in Shakespeare's own time. But our nameless writer's anathema was not yet exhausted, for he made the sweeping denunciation: "All the actors are incompetent." And worse remained behind: "The orchestra is hidden beneath a mass of vegetables." This is no doubt another instance of the vulgarity of stage illusion. Owing, we are told, to the din of the scene-

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shifters, the actors "put a false emphasis on every syllable which they uttered." It seemed, indeed, that the "national honour" was almost involved by the "lamentable caprice" of the actor-manager.

But the main indictment of the revival was against the introduction of "pantomime." To this I reply that whatever there is of pantomime is Shakespeare's. I will endeavour to prove that at no point have I gone in this direction outside the instructions of the dramatist. Shakespeare's stage instructions in Act I., Scene 1, are as follows:—"*On a ship at sea—A tempestuous noise of lightning and thunder heard.*" Acting upon these instructions, we were presumptuous enough to endeavour to depict a ship at sea, as well as modern appliances will allow, to reproduce the effect of thunder and lightning, and to assume that their accompaniment might not too incongruously be a rough sea.

Again, another of Shakespeare's stage instructions runs: "*Enter several strange Shapes, bringing in a banquet, they dance about it with gentle actions of salutation; and, inviting the King, etc., to eat, they depart.*" Here there is a certain suggestion of pantomime which was carried out faithfully.

Again, in the same scene, Shakespeare's instructions are: "*Thunder and lightning—enter Ariel like a harpy—claps his wings on the table,*

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and with a quaint device the banquet vanishes." Here Ariel was permitted to resemble a harpy as nearly as possible. The pantomime is Shakespeare's.

The ballet introduced may need a few words of apology or explanation. In this scene Shakespeare deliberately introduces a masque, which Prospero conjures up for the entertainment of Ferdinand and Miranda. We merely tried to follow the author's injunctions, and we know how elaborate were the masques in Shakespeare's day. Iris and Ceres and Juno enter, summoned by the wand of Prospero, and according to the instructions of the dramatist, they sing. (Throughout this play Shakespeare has recourse to the aid of music.) The instructions are somewhat meagre as to the nature of the masque, and in their absence I thought it justifiable to invent the revels as suggested by the dialogue. Briefly, Iris calls upon the Nymphs to be merry and to dance with the Reapers.

At this point Shakespeare introduces a masque, in which Iris calls on the "Naiads of the winding brooks . . . . to celebrate a contract of true love," with the "sunburnt sicklemen of August weary." The author's stage instructions are as follows:—"*Enter certain Reapers properly habited. They join with the Nymphs in a graceful dance.*" To illustrate this incident, I have designed a little ballet with a purpose, of which

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the following explanatory story may not be amiss. The Naiads of the winding brooks are discovered disporting themselves in the water among the rushes and water-lilies. Iris calls on them to leave their crisp channels to dance on the green turf. Nothing loth, the Naiads leave their native element and dance as mortals dance. The sudden appearance of the boy Cupid interrupts their revels—the Naiads modestly immerse themselves in the water. Cupid, ever a match-maker, brings in his train the sunburnt sicklemen who, leaving their lonely furrows, are enjoined by Iris to make holiday with the Nymphs "in country footing." Taking advantage of the chaste amiability of the Nymphs, the Reapers endeavour to embrace them, but their advances are indignantly repulsed, the maidens very rightly pointing to their ringless wedding-fingers, it being illegal (in fairy-land) to exchange kisses without a marriage certificate. Thus rebuffed, the Reapers continue their dance alone. Suddenly Cupid re-appears on the scene, and shoots a dart in the heart of each coy maiden; at once they relent, and, love conquering modesty, they sue to the Reapers. But the Reapers are now obdurate. They laugh; the maidens weep. Cupid now shoots an arrow into the heart of each of the Reapers, who, seeing their little friends aweep, sue to them, pointing to their wedding-fingers. Cupid re-appears on the scene, and an impromptu

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wedding is arranged, all the Reapers and Nymphs taking part in the ceremony. To the wedding song of "Honour, riches, marriage-blessing," the Nymphs assume the marriage veils which they gather from the mists of the lake, and each having received a ring and a blessing at the hands of the Rev. Master Cupid, they dance off with the Reapers in quest of everlasting happiness, thus triumphantly vindicating the ethics of the drama. No excuse is necessary for this introduction, which is in obedience to the author's directions. In the absence of any detailed instructions as to the nature of the masque introduced by Shakespeare, it is hoped that this fanciful trifle will serve. It certainly had the effect of pleasing the public, and can offend none but the professional purist.

Again, in the scene in which Prospero determines to punish Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo, we endeavoured to follow faithfully the somewhat meagre instructions which are given in the play. "*A noise of hunters is heard. Enter divers spirits in shapes of dogs and hounds, hunting them about, Prospero and Ariel setting them on.*" Prospero says, "I will plague them all even to roaring." Although we could not attain to the degree of realism which Shakespeare would have us attempt when he gives us instructions: "*Enter divers spirits in shapes of dogs and hounds—hunting them about,*" yet we endeavoured to present

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spirits in animal shapes; and in order to illustrate the discomfiture of Caliban, Trinculo, and Stephano we followed Shakespeare's directions to Ariel:

> "Go, charge my goblins that they grind their joints
> With dry convulsions; shorten up their sinews
> With aged cramps. Let them be hunted soundly."

I venture to assume that by these instructions Shakespeare intended that the goblins should grind their joints with dry convulsions and that they should "hunt them soundly." Prospero also says, "I will plague them all even to roaring." Those who condemned us for introducing the goblins which they denounced as the intrusion of "vulgar pantomime," evidently overlooked the stage instructions to which I have drawn attention. And they forgot that a high fantastical note runs through the whole play which was intended to amuse (dare I say it?) the audience for which Shakespeare wrote.

Some of our critics maintained that in this production the poetry had been deliberately dispensed with as a tiresome superfluity, and that the setting alone had been considered. There were some, of course, to whom our stage treatment conveyed no sense of poetry, and these clamoured for a mode of production which we were told existed in Shakespeare's own day. They frankly preferred placards announcing the scenes in order thoroughly to abandon themselves

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to the poetry of the play. They would go farther, no doubt, and have the female parts played by males, as in Shakespeare's day. This is the style of art so dear to Bottom the Weaver, and to this spirit was given full rein in our production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, when placards announced "This is a Forest," and when Thisbe (played by a male actor) carried a board with the words "This is a Maiden," and Snug the Joiner was labelled "This is a Lion." I can imagine how Shakespeare would have laughed these champions to scorn.

At the end of the play I ventured upon a certain modification of the text by omitting the Epilogue addressed by the actor to the audience, reserving Prospero's glorious speech beginning "Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes and groves" for the end of the play.

Now, as to the characterisation in this play. The character most assailed was Caliban. I took it for granted that Shakespeare's characters were self-explanatory. Here again, it appears, I was mistaken. One writer maintained that Caliban—like Shylock!—is a purely comic character, and the attempt at the end of the play to materialise Shakespeare's spirit in a tableau met with the gravest displeasure. Many others denounce as un-Shakespearean any note of humanity which

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redeems his nature—Caliban, they said, was merely a monster. Careless reading has once more been the pitfall of the censorious. For it has been maintained with fond reiteration that Caliban is described by Shakespeare himself as "a freckled whelp, hag-born, not honour'd with a human shape." Precisely the contrary is the case. The lines are as follows:

> "Then was this island—
> (Save for the son that she did litter here,
> A freckled whelp, hag-born)—not honour'd with
> A human shape."

Thus Shakespeare definitely states that Caliban had a human shape. Caliban, too, is described by Shakespeare as "a savage and deformed slave." If he were the unredeemed monster that these writers would have us think, is it possible that he should have uttered those beautiful lines, "This isle is full of noises, sounds, and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not," &c.? Indeed, in his love of music and his affinity with the unseen world, we discern in the soul which inhabits the brutish body of this elemental man the germs of a sense of beauty, the dawn of art. And as he stretches out his arms towards the empty horizon, we feel that from the conception of sorrow in solitude may spring the birth of a higher civilisation.

I have endeavoured to show that whatever in

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this production was not actually contained in the letter of Shakespeare's text, sprang from the spirit which animated it, and I contend that those who attributed its success to the meretricious aids of scenic and other embellishments were mistaken in their conclusions—however disconcerting it may be to attribute success to merit.

This brings me to the main purpose of this Personal Explanation. It has been freely stated that in the presentation of this play, I had but pandered to a vulgar public, incapable of appreciating the works of the poet, and that, in order to attract that public, I was driven to overload the play with a lavish expenditure of money. To this charge I reply by the simple statement of fact that its cost was half that expended on a modern play recently presented at His Majesty's Theatre. And I fail to see why Shakespeare should be treated with less care, with less reverence and with less lavishness of resource than is demanded by modern authors. So far from pandering to the public taste, I claim that an artist works primarily for himself—his first aim is to satisfy his own artistic conscience. His output is the result of the impetus in him to work out his own ideals. Even were the public satisfied with a less competent treatment of the poet's work, I should still have presented it in the way I did. But so far from admitting that the public

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—my public—is a vulgar public, I am conscious that their demands upon the art of the manager are too often in excess of his powers to gratify them. I have indeed reason to be grateful to the public for having supported the policy and work of my theatre persistently, regardless of the sneers of those who are not the leaders, but the camp-followers of progress. I have no wish to quarrel with those who attack that policy and that work, for I hold that the strength of men, as of governments, is in precise proportion to the opposition they encounter. I claim, however, the right to protest against the imputation of sordid motives in placing great works before the public. I am at least entitled to maintain that I have done my best to present the works of Shakespeare in the manner which I considered most worthy, and I feel a certain pride in remembering that, be our method right or wrong, we have brought the poet's creations before hundreds of thousands.

AFTER-THOUGHT

Since this Personal Explanation was written the art of stage presentation has progressed—and I think rightly progressed—in the direction of a greater sim-

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plicity of treatment. This progress is chiefly due to the increased facilities for economy in the lighting of scenery—suggestion is often stronger than actuality where purely fantastic and imaginative works are concerned. I would, of course, not apply this law to scenes of realism, in which most of Shakespeare's plays pass. In Hamlet *I have found myself most happy in the purely suggestive surroundings of tapestries, and I have received assurances from many playgoers that they were more impressed by this mode of treating the play than by any other. In our recent production of* Macbeth, *too, the scenery was characterised by simple grandeur rather than by magnificence of detail. Rugged simplicity was the note of an admirable production of* King Lear *at the Haymarket Theatre. It would, of course, be an artistic mistake to apply this treatment to such plays as* Julius Cæsar *or* Richard II. *or* Henry VIII., *or indeed to any of the history plays. Simplicity is certainly an enviable state. In life —as in art—it is only arrived at after wandering through the maze of complexity. It is the slow process of elimination of unessentials.*

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KING HENRY VIII

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INTRODUCTORY

In these notes, written as a holiday task, it is not intended to give an exhaustive record of the events of Henry's reign; but rather to offer an impression of the more prominent personages in Shakespeare's play; and perhaps to aid the playgoer in a fuller appreciation of the conditions which governed their actions.

Marienbad, 1910.

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KING HENRY VIII.

HOLBEIN, with skilful brush, has drawn the character and written the history of Henry in his great picture. Masterful, cruel, crafty, merciless, courageous, sensual, through-seeing, humorous, mean, matter of fact, worldly-wise, and of indomitable will, Henry the Eighth is perhaps the most outstanding figure in English history. The reason is not far to seek. The genial adventurer with sporting tendencies and large-hearted proclivities is always popular with the mob, and "Bluff King Hal" was of the eternal type adored by the people. He had a certain outward and inward affinity with Nero. Like

His Character.

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Nero, he was corpulent; like Nero, he was red-haired; like Nero, he sang and poetised; like Nero, he was a lover of horsemanship, a master of the arts, and the slave of his passions. If his private vices were great, his public virtues were no less considerable. He had the ineffable quality called charm, and the appearance of good-nature which captivated all who came within the orbit of his radiant personality. He was the *beau garçon*, endearing himself to all women by his compelling and conquering manhood. Henry was every inch a man, but he was no gentleman. He chucked even Justice under the chin, and Justice winked her blind eye.

It is extraordinary that, in spite of his brutality, both Katharine of Aragon and Anne Boleyn spoke of him as a model of kindness. This cannot be accounted for merely by that divinity which doth hedge a king.

There is, above all, in the face of Henry, as limned by Holbein, that look of impenetrable mystery which was the background of his character. Many royal men have this strange quality; with some it is inborn, with others it is assumed. Cavendish, who was Wolsey's faithful secretary—he who after the Cardinal's fall wrote the interesting "Life of Wolsey," one of the manuscript copies of which evidently fell into Shakespeare's hands before he wrote *Henry VIII.*

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—records this saying of Henry: "Three may keep counsel, if two be away; and if I thought my cap knew my counsel, I would throw it in the fire and burn it." Referring to this passage, Brewer says, "Never had the King spoke a truer word or described himself more accurately. Few would have thought that, under so careless and splendid an exterior—the very ideal of bluff, open-hearted good humour and frankness—there lay a watchful and secret mind that marked what was going on without seeming to mark it; kept its own counsel until it was time to strike, and then struck as suddenly and remorselessly as a beast of prey. It was strange to witness so much subtlety combined with so much strength."

There was something baffling and terrifying in the mysterious bonhomie of the King. In spite of Cæsar's dictum, it is the fat enemy who is to be feared; a thin villain is more easily seen through.

His Ancestry.

Henry's antecedents were far from glorious. The Tudors were a Welsh family of somewhat humble stock. Henry VII.'s great-grandfather was butler or steward to the Bishop of Bangor, whose son, Owen Tudor, coming to London, obtained a clerkship of the Wárdrobe to Henry V.'s Queen, Catherine of France. Within a few years of Henry's death, the widowed Queen and her clerk of the wardrobe were secretly living together as

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man and wife. The two sons of this morganatic match, Edmund and Jasper, were favoured by their half brother, Henry VI. Edmund, the elder, was knighted, and then made Earl of Richmond. In 1458 he was formally declared legitimate, and enrolled a member of the King's Council. Two years later he married the Lady Margaret Beaufort, a descendant of Edward III. It was this union between Edmund Tudor and Margaret Beaufort which gave Henry VII. his claim by descent to the English throne.

The popularity of the Tudors was, no doubt, enhanced by the fact that with their line kings of decisively English blood for the first time since the Norman Conquest sat on the English throne.

His Early Days.

When Henry VIII. ascended the throne in 1509, England regarded him with almost universal loyalty. The memory of the long years of the Wars of the Roses and the wars of the Pretenders, during the reign of his father, were fresh in the people's mind. No other than he could have attained to the throne without civil war.

Within two months he married Katharine of Aragon, his brother's widow, and a few days afterwards the King and Queen were crowned with great splendour in Westminster Abbey. He was still in his eighteenth year, of fine physical development, but of no special mental precocity.

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For the first five years of his reign he was influenced by his Council, and especially by his father-in-law, Ferdinand the Catholic, giving little indication of the later mental vigour and power of initiation which were to make his reign so memorable in the annals of England.

The political situation in Europe was a difficult one for Henry to deal with. France and Spain were the rivals for Imperial dominion. England was in danger of falling between two stools, such was the eagerness of each that the other should not support her. Henry, through his marriage with Katharine, began by being allied to Spain, and this alliance involved England in the costly burden of war. Henry's resentment at the empty result of this warfare broke the Spanish alliance. Wolsey's aim was to keep the country out of wars, and a long period of peace raised England to the position of arbiter of Europe in the balanced contest between France and Spain.

It was in connection with the diplomacies and intrigues, now with one Power, now with the other, that in 1520 was held the famous meeting with the French King at Guisnes, known as "the Field of the Cloth of Gold."

The Field of the Cloth of Gold.

That the destinies of kingdoms sometimes hang on trifles is curiously exemplified by a singular incident which preceded the famous

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meeting. Francis I. prided himself on his beard. As a proof of his desire for the meeting with Francis, and out of compliment to the French King, Henry announced his resolve to wear his beard uncut until the meeting took place. But he reckoned without his wife. Some weeks before the meeting, Louise of Savoy, the Queen-Mother of France, taxed Boleyn, the English Ambassador, with a report that Henry had put off his beard. "I said," writes Boleyn, "that, as I suppose, it hath been by the Queen's desire, for I told my lady that I have hereafore known when the King's grace hath worn long his beard, that the Queen hath daily made him great instance, and desired him to put it off for her sake." This incident caused some resentment on the part of the French King, who was only pacified by Henry's tact.

So small a matter might have proved a *casus belli*.

The meeting was held amidst scenes of unparalleled splendour. The temporary palace erected for the occasion was so magnificent that a chronicler tells us it might have been the work of Leonardo da Vinci. Henry, "the goodliest prince that ever reigned over the realm of England," is described as "*honnête, hault et droit*, in manner gentle and gracious, rather fat, with a red beard, large enough, and very becoming."

On this occasion Wolsey was accompanied by

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two hundred gentlemen clad in crimson velvet, and had a bodyguard of two hundred archers. He was clothed in crimson satin from head to foot, his mule was covered with crimson velvet, and her trappings were all of gold.

There were jousts and many entertainments and rejoicings, many kissings of Royal cheeks, but the Sovereigns hated each other cordially. When monarchs kiss in public we may look for a shuffling of the *entente*. While they were kissing they were plotting against each other.

A more unedifying page of history has not been written. Appalling, indeed, are the shifts and intrigues which go to make up the records of the time.

The rulers of Europe were playing a game of cards, in which all the players were in collusion with, and all cheating, each other. Temporising and intriguing, Henry met the Spanish monarch immediately before and immediately after his meeting with the French King. Within a few months France and Spain were again at war; and England, in a fruitless and costly struggle, fought on the side of Spain.

It was the divorce from Katharine of Aragon and its momentous consequences which finally put an end to the alliance with Spain; and to the struggle with France succeeded the long struggle with Spain, which culminated in the great

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event of The Armada in the reign of Henry's daughter, Elizabeth.

However, we are not here concerned with the political aspect of the times, but rather with the dramatic and domestic side of Henry's being. In the play of *Henry VIII.*, the author or authors (for to another than Shakespeare is ascribed a portion of the drama) have given us as impartial a view of his character as a due regard for truth on the one hand, and a respect for the scaffold on the other, permitted.

There can be no doubt that when Henry ascended the throne he had a sincere wish to serve God and uphold the right.

His Aspirations.

In his early years he was really devout and generous in almsgiving. Erasmus affirmed that his Court was an example to all Christendom for learning and piety. To the Pope he paid deference as to the representative of God.

With youthful enthusiasm, the young King, looking round, and seeing corruption on every side, said to Giustiniani, the Venetian ambassador: "Nor do I see any faith in the world save in me, and therefore God Almighty, who knows this, prosper my affairs."

In Henry's early reign England was trusted more than any country to keep faith in her alliances. At a time when all was perfidy and

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treachery, promises and alliances were made only to be broken when self-interest prompted. History, like Nature itself, is ruled by brutal laws, and to play the round game of politics with single-handed honesty would be to lose at every turn. Henry was born into an inheritance of blood and blackmail. Corruption has its vested interests. It is useless to attempt to stem the recurrent tide of corruption by sprinkling the waves with holy water.

Then religion was a part of men's daily lives, but the principles of Christianity were set at naught at the first bidding of expediency.

Men murdered to live—the axe and the sword were the final Court of Appeal. Nor does the old order change appreciably in the course of a few hundred years. In international politics, as in public life, when self-interest steps in Christianity goes to the wall.

Blood is thicker than water, but gold is thicker than blood.

To-day we grind our axe with a difference. A more subtle process of dealing with our rivals obtains. To-day the pen is mightier than the sword, the stylograph is more deadly than the stiletto. The bravo still plies his trade. He no longer takes life, but character.

Henry's eyes soon opened. His character, like his body, underwent a gradual process of expansion.

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Soon the lighter side of kingship was not disdained. One authority wrote in 1515: "He is a youngling, cares for nothing but girls and hunting." He was an inveterate gambler, and turned the sport of hunting into a martyrdom, rising at four or five in the morning and hunting till nine or ten at night. Another contemporary writes: "He devotes himself to accomplishments and amusements day and night, is intent on nothing else, and leaves business to Wolsey, who rules everything."

His Pastimes.

As a sportsman, Henry was the beau-ideal of his people. In the lists he especially distinguished himself, "in supernatural feats, changing his horses, and making them fly or rather leap, to the delight and ecstasy of everybody."

He also gave himself to masquerades and charades. We are told: "It was at the Christmas festivals at Richmond that Henry VIII. stole from the side of the Queen during the jousts, and returned in the disguise of a strange Knight, astonishing all the company with the grace and vigour of his tilting. At first the King appeared ashamed of taking part in these gladiatorial exercises, but the applause he received on all sides soon inclined him openly to appear on every occasion in the tilt-yard. Katharine humoured the childish taste of her husband for disguisings

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and masquings, by pretending great surprise when he presented himself before her in some assumed character."

He was gifted with enormous energy; he could ride all day, changing his horses nine or ten times a day; then he would dance all night; even then his energies were not exhausted; he would write what the courtiers described as poetry, or he would compose music, or he would dash off an attack on Luther, and so earn from the Pope the much-coveted title of *Fidei Defensor*.

In shooting at the butt, it is said, Henry excelled, drawing the best bow in England. At tennis, too, he excelled beyond all others. He was addicted to games of chance, and his courtiers permitted him to lose as much as £8,500 in the course of one year—scarcely a tactful proceeding. He played with taste and execution on the organ, harpsichord, and lute. He had a powerful voice, and sang with great accomplishment.

One of Henry's anthems, "O Lord, the Maker of all thyng," is said to be of the highest merit, and is still sung in our cathedrals. In his songs he particularly liked to dwell on his constancy as a lover:

"As the holly groweth green and never changeth hue,
So I am—ever have been—unto my lady true."

And again:

"For whoso loveth, should love but one."

An admirable maxim.

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"Pastime with Good Company," composed and written by Henry, was sung in the production at His Majesty's Theatre.

In spite of all these distractions, Henry was an excellent man of business in the State. Although he began by throwing himself into dissipation with the energy which characterised all his doings, the autocrat only slumbered in Henry; and before many years had passed he flung the enormous energy, which he had hitherto reserved for his pleasure, into affairs of State.

As Statesman.

Under Henry, the Navy was first organised as a permanent force. His power of detail was prodigious in this direction. Ever loving the picturesque, even in the most practical affairs of life, Henry "acted as pilot and wore a sailor's coat and trousers, made of cloth of gold, and a gold chain with the inscription, *Dieu est mon droit*, to which was suspended a whistle which he blew nearly as loud as a trumpet." A strange picture!

He was a practical architect, and Whitehall Palace and many other great buildings owed their masonry to his hand.

He spoke French, Spanish, Italian and Latin with great perfection.

He said many wise things. Of the much-debated divorce, Henry said: "The law of every man's conscience be but a private Court, yet

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it is the highest and supreme Court for judgment or justice." As the most unjust wars have often produced the greatest heroisms, so the vilest causes have often produced the profoundest utterances.

He appears to have been at peace with himself and complacent towards God. In 1541, during his temporary happiness with Catherine Howard, he attended mass in the chapel, and "receiving his Maker, gave Him most hearty thanks for the good life he led and trusted to lead with his wife; and also desired the Bishop of Lincoln to make like prayer, and give like thanks on All Souls' Day."

Henry confessed his sins every day during the plague. When it abated, his spirits revived, and he wrote daily love-letters to Anne Boleyn, whom he had previously banished from the Court.

As Moralist.

A stern moralist in regard to the conduct of others, he had an indulgence towards himself which enabled him somewhat freely to interpret the Divine right of Kings as *Le droit de seigneur*. But it is human to tolerate in ourselves the failings which we so rightly deprecate in our inferiors.

So strong was he in his self-assurance, that he made even his conscience his slave.

Henry sometimes lacked regal taste. The night Anne Boleyn was executed he supped with Jane Seymour; they were betrothed the next

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morning, and married ten days later. It is also recorded that on the day following Katharine's death, Henry went to a ball, clad all in yellow.

The commendation or condemnation of Henry's public life depends upon our point of view—upon which side we take in the eternal strife between Church and State.

In this dilemma we must then judge by results, for the truest expression of a man is his work; his greatness or his littleness is measured by his output. Henry produced great results, though he may have been the unconscious instrument of Fate. The motives which guided him in his dealings with the Roman Catholic Church may have been only selfish—they resulted in the emancipation of England from the tyranny of Popedom. A Catholic estimate of him would, of course, have been wholly condemnatory, yet it must be remembered that his quarrel was entirely with the supremacy of the Pope, and that otherwise Henry's Church retained every dogma and every observance believed in and practised by Roman Catholics.

His Greatness.

His learning was great, and it was illumined by his genius. Gradually he learned to control others—to do this he learned to control his temper when control was useful, but he was always able to make diplomatic use of his rage—a faculty ever helpful in the conduct of

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one's life! In fact, it is difficult to determine whose genius was the greater—Wolsey's as the diplomatist and administrator, or Henry's as the man of action, the figurehead of the State. Around him he gathered the great men of his time, and their learning he turned to his own account, with that adaptiveness which is the peculiar attribute of genius. Shakespeare himself was not more assimilative. In Wolsey, Henry appreciated the mighty minister, and this is one of his claims to greatness, for graciously to permit others to be great is a sign of greatness in a king.

WOLSEY

Wolsey was born at Ipswich, probably in the year 1471. His father, Robert Wolsey, was a grazier, and perhaps also a butcher, in well-to-do circumstances. Sent to Oxford at the age of eleven, at fifteen he was made a Bachelor of Arts. He became a parish priest of St. Mary's, at Lymington, in 1500. Within a year he was subjected to the indignity of being put into the public stocks —for what reason is not known. It has been said that he was concerned in a drunken fray. I prefer to think that, in an unguarded moment, he had been tempted to speak the truth. No doubt this was his first lesson in diplomacy.

His Early Life.

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In 1507 Wolsey entered the service of Henry VII. as chaplain, and seems to have acted as secretary to Richard Fox, Lord Privy Seal. Thus Wolsey was trained in the policy of Henry VII., which he never forgot.

When Henry VIII. came to the throne, he soon realised Wolsey's value, and allowed him full scope for his ambition.

His Growing Power.

Wolsey thought it desirable to become a Cardinal—a view that was shared by Henry, whose right hand Wolsey had become. In 1514 Henry wrote to the Pope asking that the hat should be conferred on his favourite, who in the following year was made Lord Chancellor of England. There was some hesitancy, which bribery and threats overcame, and in 1515 Wolsey was created Cardinal, in spite of the hatred which Leo X. bore him. Having won this instalment of greatness, Wolsey promptly asked for the Legateship, which should give him precedence over the Archbishop of Canterbury. This ambition was realised three years later, but only by what practically amounted to political and ecclesiastical blackmail. In the Church and State Wolsey now stood second only to the King.

As an instance of the state that he kept, we are told that he had as many as 500 retainers—among

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them many lords and ladies. Cavendish, his secretary, thus describes his pomp when he walked abroad: "First went the Cardinal's attendants, attired in boddices of crimson velvet with gold chains, and the inferior officers in coats of scarlet bordered with black velvet. After these came two gentlemen bearing the great seal and his Cardinal's hat, then two priests with silver pillars and poleaxes, and next two great crosses of silver, whereof one of them was for his Archbishoprick and the other for his legacy, borne always before him, whithersoever he went or rode. Then came the Cardinal himself, very sumptuously, on a mule trapped with crimson velvet and his stirrup of copper gilt." Sometimes he preferred to make his progress on the river, for which purpose he had a magnificent State barge "furnished with yeomen standing on the bayles and crowded with his Gentlemen within and without."

His Retinue.

His stables were also extensive. His choir far excelled that of the King. Besides all the officials attendant on the Cardinal, Wolsey had 160 personal attendants, including his High Chamberlain, vice-chamberlain, twelve gentlemen ushers, daily waiters, eight gentlemen ushers and waiters of his privy chamber, nine or ten lords, forty persons acting as gentlemen cupbearers, carvers, servers,

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etc., six yeomen ushers, eight grooms of the chamber, forty-six yeomen of his chamber (one daily to attend upon his person), sixteen doctors and chaplains, two secretaries, three clerks, and four counsellors learned in the law. As Lord Chancellor, he had an additional and separate retinue, almost as numerous, including ministers, armourers, serjeants-at-arms, herald, etc.

Nor was he above using the gentle suasion of his office to obtain sumptuous gifts from the representatives of foreign powers—

Gifts from Foreign Powers.

for Giustiniani, on his return to Venice, reported to the Doge and Senate that "Cardinal Wolsey is very anxious for the signory to send him a hundred Damascene carpets for which he has asked several times, and expected to receive them by the last galleys. This present might make him pass a decree in our favour; and, at any rate, it would render the Cardinal friendly to our nation in other matters." The carpets, it seems, were duly sent to the Cardinal.

To show his disregard for money, it may be mentioned that in order to obtain pure water for himself and his household, and not being satisfied with the drinking water at Hampton Court, Wolsey had the water brought from the springs at Coombe Hill by means

His Drinking Water.

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of leaden pipes, at a cost, it is said, of something like £50,000.

His Table.

Wolsey seems to have been a lover of good food, since Skelton, for whose verse the Cardinal had perhaps expressed contempt, wrote:

"To drynke and for to eate
Swete hypocras * and swete meate
To keep his flesh chast
In Lent for a repast
He eateth capon's stew,
Fesaunt and partriche mewed
Hennes checkynges and pygges."

Skelton, it should be explained, was the Poet Laureate. It appears that on this score of his delicate digestion, Wolsey procured a dispensation from the Pope for the Lenten observances.

He had not a robust constitution, and suffered from many ailments. On one occasion, Henry sent him some pills—it is not recorded, however, that Wolsey swallowed them.

His Orange.

Cavendish speaks of a peculiar habit of the great Cardinal. He tells us that, "Whenever he was in a crowd or pestered with suitors, he most commonly held to his nose a very fair orange whereof the meat or substance within was taken out, and filled up again with the part of a sponge

* Hypocras—"A favourite medicated drink, compound of wine, usually red, with spices and sugar."

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wherein was vinegar and other confections against the pestilent airs!" The habit may have given offence to importunate mayors and others—indeed, the Poet Laureate himself may have been thus affronted by the imperious Cardinal, when he wrote:

"He is set so high
In his hierarchy
Of frantic phrenesy
And foolish fantasy
That in the Chamber of Stars
All matters there he mars.
Clapping his rod on the Board
No man dare speak a word;
* * * * *
Some say 'yes' and some
Sit still as they were dumb.
Thus thwarting over them,
He ruleth all the roast
With bragging and with boast.
Borne up on every side
With pomp and with pride."

As a proof of his sensuous tastes, Cavendish wrote:

"The subtle perfumes of musk and sweet amber
There wanted none to perfume all my chamber."

His Fool.

That Wolsey, like Henry, was possessed of a sense of humour we have abundant evidence in his utterances. Yet he kept a Fool about him—possibly in order that he might glean the opinions of the courtiers and common people. After Wolsey's fall, he sent this Fool as a present to King Henry.

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But so loth was the Fool to leave his master and to suffer what he considered a social descent, that six tall yeomen had to conduct him to the Court; "for," says Cavendish, "the poor fool took on and fired so in such a rage when he saw that he must needs depart from my lord. Yet, notwithstanding, they conveyed him with Master Norris to the Court, where the King received him most gladly."

Hampton Court.

At his Palace of Hampton Court there were 280 beds always ready for strangers. These beds were of great splendour, being made of red, green and russet velvet, satin and silk, and all with magnificent canopies. The counterpanes, of which there were many hundreds, we are told, were of "tawny damask, lined with blue buckram; blue damask with flowers of gold; others of red satin with a great rose in the midst, wrought with needlework and with garters." Another is described as "of blue sarcenet, with a tree in the midst and beastes with scriptures, all wrought with needlework." The splendour of these beds beggars all description.

His Plate.

His gold and silver plate at Hampton Court alone, was valued by the Venetian Ambassador as worth 800,000 golden ducats, which would be the equivalent in modern coin of a million and a half! The silver was estimated at a similar

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amount. It is said that the quality was no less striking than the quantity, for Wolsey insisted on the most artistic workmanship. He had also a bowl of gold "with a cover garnished with rubies, diamonds, pearls and a sapphire set in a goblet." These gorgeous vessels were decorated with the Cardinal's hat, and sometimes too—less appropriately perhaps—with images of Christ!

It is said that the decorations and furniture of Wolsey's palace were on so splendid a scale that it threw the King's into the shade.

His Prodigal Splendour.

Like a wise minister, Wolsey did not neglect to entertain the King and keep his mind on trivial things. Hampton Court had become the scene of unrestrained gaiety. Music was always played on these occasions, and the King frequently took part in the revels, dancing, masquerading and singing, accompanying himself on the harpsichord or lute.

The description by Cavendish of the famous feast given by the Cardinal to the French ambassadors gives a graphic account of his prodigal splendour. As to the delicacies which were furnished at the supper, Cavendish writes: "Anon came up the second course with so many dishes, subtleties and curious devices, which were above a hundred in number, of so goodly proportion and costly, that I suppose the Frenchmen never

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saw the like. The wonder was no less than it was worthy, indeed. There were castles with images in the same; Paul's Church and steeple, in proportion for the quantity as well counterfeited as the painter should have painted it upon a cloth or wall. There were beasts, birds, fowls of divers kinds, and personages, most lively made and counterfeit in dishes; some fighting, as it were, with swords, some with guns and crossbows; some vaulting and leaping; some dancing with ladies, some in complete harness, justing with spears, and with many more devices than I am able with my wit to describe."

Giustiniani, speaking of one of these banquets, writes: "The like of it was never given either by Cleopatra or Caligula." We must remember that Wolsey surrounded himself with such worldly vanities less from any vulgarity in his nature than from a desire to work upon the common mind, ever ready to be impressed by pomp and circumstance.

The Mind of Wolsey.

If the outer man were thus caparisoned, what of Wolsey's mind? Its furniture too, beggared all description. Amiable as Wolsey could be, he could also on occasions be as brusque as his royal master. A contemporary writer says: "I had rather be commanded to Rome than deliver letters to him and wait an answer. When he walks in the Park, he will suffer no suitor to

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come nigh unto him, but commands him away as far as a man will shoot an arrow."

Yet to others he could be of sweet and gentle disposition, and ready to listen and to help with advice.

"Lofty and sour to them that loved him not,
But to those men that sought him sweet as summer."

To those who regard characters as either black or white, Wolsey's was indeed a contradiction. Charges of a personal character have been brought against the great prelate, which need not here be referred to, unless it be to say that if they were true, by so much the less was he a priest, by so much the more was he a man.

There is no doubt that the Cardinal made several attempts to become Pope—but this enterprise was doomed to failure, although in it he was supported warmly by the King. To gain this end much bribery was needed, "especially to the younger men who are generally the most needy," as the Cardinal said. Wolsey was a sufficiently accomplished social diplomatist to conciliate the young, for their term of office begins to-morrow, and gold is the key of consciences. He was hated and feared, flattered, cajoled and browbeaten where possible. But as a source of income he was ever held in high regard by the Pope.

His Ambition.

His own annual income from bribes—royal and

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otherwise—was indeed stupendous, though these were received with the knowledge of the King.

So great was the power to which Wolsey attained that Fox said of him: "We have to deal with the Cardinal, who is not Cardinal but King." He wrote of himself, "*Ego et rex meus*," and had the initials, "T.W." and the Cardinal's hat stamped on the King's coins. These were among the charges brought against him in his fall.

To his ambitions there was no limit. For the spoils of office he had "an unbounded stomach." As an instance of his pretensions it is recorded that during the festivities of the Emperor's visit to England in 1520, "Wolsey alone sat down to dinner with the royal party, while peers, like the Dukes of Suffolk and Buckingham, performed menial offices for the Cardinal, as well as for Emperor, King and Queen."

When he met Charles at Bruges in 1521 "he treated the Emperor of Spain as an equal. He did not dismount from his mule, but merely doffed his cap, and embraced as a brother the temporal head of Christendom."

"He never granted audience either to English peers or foreign ambassadors" (says Giustiniani) "until the third or fourth time of asking." Small wonder that he incurred the hatred of the nobility and the jealousy of the King. During his embassy to France in 1527, it is said that "his attendants

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served cap in hand, and when bringing the dishes knelt before him in the act of presenting them. Those who waited on the Most Christian King, kept their caps on their heads, dispensing with such exaggerated ceremonies." Had Wolsey's insolence been tempered by his sense of humour, his fall might have been on a softer place, as his fool is believed to have remarked.

In his policy of the reform of the Church, Wolsey dealt as a giant with his gigantic task. To quote a passage from Taunton: "Ignorance, he knew, was the root of most of the mischief of the day; so by education he endeavoured to give men the means to know better. Falsehood can only be expelled by Truth. . . . Had the other prelates of the age realised the true cause of the religious disputes, and how much they themselves were responsible for the present Ignorance, the sacred name of religion would not have had so bloody a record in this country."

His Policy.

Wolsey's idea was, in fact, to bring the clergy in touch with the thought and conditions of the time. It is wonderful to reflect that this one brain should have controlled the secular and ecclesiastical destinies of Christendom.

To reform the Church would seem to have been an almost superhuman undertaking, but to a man of Wolsey's greatness obstacles are only in-

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centives to energy. He was "eager to cleanse the Church from the accumulated evil effects of centuries of human passions." A great man is stronger than a system, while he lives; but the system often outlives the man. Wolsey lived in a time the very atmosphere of which was charged with intrigue. Had he not yielded to a government by slaughter, he could not have existed.

The Cardinal realised that ignorance was one of the chief causes of the difficulties in the Church. So with great zeal he devoted himself to the founding of two colleges, one in Ipswich, the other in Oxford. His scheme was never entirely carried out, for on Wolsey's fall his works were not completed. The College at Ipswich fell into abeyance, but his college at Oxford was spared and refounded. Originally called Cardinal College, it was renamed Christ Church, so that not even in name was it allowed to be a memorial of Wolsey's greatness.

His Genius.

For a long time Wolsey was regarded merely as the type of the ambitious and arrogant ecclesiastic whom the Reformation had made an impossibility in the future. It was not till the mass of documents relating to the reign of Henry VIII. was published that it was possible to estimate the greatness of the Cardinal's schemes. He took a wider view of the problems of his time than any statesman had done before. He had a genius for

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diplomacy. He was an artist and enthusiast in politics. They were not a pursuit to him, but a passion. Not perhaps unjustly has he been called the greatest statesman England ever produced.

England, at the beginning of Henry VIII.'s reign, was weakened after the struggles of the Civil Wars, and wished to find peace at home at the cost of obscurity abroad. But it was this England which Wolsey's policy raised "from a third-rate state of little account into the highest circle of European politics." Wolsey did not show his genius to the best advantage in local politics, but in diplomacy. He could only be inspired by the gigantic things of statecraft. When he was set by Henry to deal with the sordid matter of the divorce, he felt restricted and cramped. He was better as a patriot than as a royal servant. It was this feeling of being sullied and unnerved in the uncongenial skirmishings of the divorce that jarred on his sensitive nature and made his ambitious hand lose its cunning. A first-rate man may not do second-rate things well.

Henry and Wolsey were two giants littered in one day. Wolsey had realised his possibilities of power before Henry. But when Henry once learned how easy it was for him to get his own way, Wolsey learned how dependent he necessarily was on the King's good will. And then, "the nation which had trembled before Wolsey, learned to tremble before the King who could destroy Wolsey with a breath."

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Had Wolsey been able to fulfil his own ideals, had he been the head of a republic and not the servant of a king, his public record would no doubt have been on a higher ethical plane. That he himself realised this is shown by his pathetic words to Sir William Kingston, which have been but slightly paraphrased by Shakespeare: "Well, well, Master Kingston, I see how the matter against me is framed, but if I had served my God as diligently as I have done the King, He would not have given me over in my grey hairs." In this frankness we recognise once again a flicker of greatness—one might almost say a touch of divine humour.

Alas, Wolsey learned to howl with the wolves and to bleat with the lambs. In paddling too long in the putrescent puddles of politics he lost his sense of ethical proportion.

The lives of great men compose themselves dramatically; Wolsey's end was indeed a fit theme for the dramatist.

His Fall.

In his later years, Wolsey began to totter on his throne. The King had become more and more masterful. It was impossible for two such stormy men to act permanently in concord. In 1528, Wolsey said that as soon as he had accomplished his ambition of reconciling England and France, and reforming the English laws and settling the succession, "he would retire and serve God for the

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rest of his days." In 1529 he lost his hold over Parliament and over Henry. The Great Seal was taken from him.

The end of Wolsey was indeed appalling in its sordid tragedy. The woman had prevailed—Anne's revenge was sufficiently complete to satisfy even a woman scorned. The King, too, was probably more inclined to lend a willing ear to her whisperings, since he had grown jealous of his minister's greatness. He paid to his superior the tribute of hatred. Henry, who had treated the Cardinal as his friend and "walked with him in the garden arm in arm and sometimes with his arm thrown caressingly round his shoulder," now felt very differently towards his one-time favourite.

Covetous of Wolsey's splendour, he asked him why he, a subject, should have so magnificent an abode as Hampton Court, whereupon Wolsey diplomatically answered (feeling perhaps the twitch of a phantom rope around his neck), "To show how noble a palace a subject may offer to his sovereign." The King was not slow to accept this offer, and thenceforth made Hampton Court Palace his own.

Wolsey, too, was failing in body—the sharks that follow the ship of State were already scenting their prey. As the King turned his back on Wolsey, Wolsey turned his face to God. Accused of high treason for having acted as Legate, Wolsey

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pleaded guilty of the offence, committed with the approval of the King. He was deprived of his worldly goods, and retired to his house at Esher.

Cavendish says: "My Lord and his family continued there the space of three or four weeks, without beds, sheets, tablecloths, cups and dishes to eat our meat, or to lie in." He was forced to borrow the bare necessaries of life. The mighty had fallen indeed! This was in the year 1529. In his disgrace, he was without friends. The Pope ignored him. But Queen Katharine—noble in a kindred sorrow—sent words of sympathy. Death was approaching, and Wolsey prepared himself for the great event by fasting and prayer. Ordered to York, he arrived at Peterborough in Easter Week. There, it is said: "Upon Palm Sunday, he went in procession with the monks, bearing his palm; setting forth God's service right honourably with such singing men as he then had remaining with him.

Wolsey an Exile from Court.

"And upon Maundy Thursday he made his Maundy in Our Lady's Chapel, having fifty-nine poor men, whose feet he washed, wiped and kissed; each of these poor men had twelve pence in money, three ells of canvas to make them shirts, a pair of new shoes, a cast of mead, three red herrings, and three white herrings, and the odd person had two shillings. Upon Easter Day

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he rode to the Resurrection—the ceremony of bringing the Blessed Sacrament from the sepulchre where it had lain since the Good Friday; this took place early on Easter Monday—and that morning he went in procession in his Cardinal's vesture, with his hat and hood on his head, and he himself sang there the High Mass very devoutly, and granted Clean Remission to all the hearers, and there continued all the holidays."

Arrived at York, he indulged with a difference in his old love of hospitality; "he kept a noble house and plenty of both meat and drink for all comers, both for rich and poor, and much alms given at his gates. He used much charity and pity among his poor tenants and others." This caused him to be beloved in the country, Those that hated him owing to his repute learned to love him—he went among the people and brought them food and comforted them in their troubles. Now he was loved among the poor as he had been feared among the great.

Condemned to the Tower.

On November 4th, he was arrested on a new charge of high treason and condemned to the Tower. He left under custody amid the lamentations of the poor people, who in their thousands crowded round him, crying "God save your Grace! God save your Grace! The foul evil take all them that hath thus taken you

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from us! We pray God that a very vengeance may light upon them." He remained at Sheffield Park, the Earl of Shrewsbury's seat, for eighteen days. Here his health broke down. There arrived, with twenty-four of the Guard from London, Sir William Kingston with an order to conduct him to the Tower. The next day, in spite of increasing illness, he set out, but he could hardly ride his mule.

Reaching the Abbey at Leicester on November 26th, and being received by the Benedictine monks, he said: "Father Abbot, I am come hither to leave my bones among you." Here he took to his last bed, and made ready to meet his God.

His End.

On the morning of November 29th, he who had trod the ways of glory and sounded all the depths and shoals of honour, he who had shaped the destinies of Empires, before whom Popes and Parliaments had trembled, he who had swathed himself in the purple of kingdom, of power, and of glory, learned the littleness of greatness and entered the Republic of Death in a hair-shirt.

KATHARINE

For purity and steadfastness of devotion and duty, Katharine of Aragon stands unsurpassed in the history of the world, and Shakespeare has conceived no more pathetic figure than that of the

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patient Queen living in the midst of an unscrupulous Court.

Her Story.

Daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, she was betrothed at the age of five to Arthur, Henry VII.'s eldest son. Though known as the Princess of Wales, it was not till 1501, when only sixteen years old, that she was married to Prince Arthur. She had scarcely been married six months when Arthur died, at the early age of fifteen, and she was left a widow. Henry VII., in his desire to keep her marriage dower of 200,000 crowns, proposed a marriage between her and Arthur's brother. Katharine wrote to her father saying she had "no inclination for a second marriage in England." In spite of her remonstrances and the misgivings of the Pope, who had no wish to give the necessary dispensation for her to marry her deceased husband's brother, she was betrothed to the young Henry after two years of widowhood. But it was not till a few months after Henry VIII. came to the throne, five years later, that they were actually married. Henry was five years younger than Katharine, but their early married life appears to have been very happy. She wrote to her father, "Our time is ever passed in continual feasts."

The cruel field sports of the time the Queen never could take any delight in, and avoided them as much as possible. She was pious and

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ascetic and most proficient in needlework. Katharine had a number of children, all of whom died shortly after birth. It was this consideration in the first instance which weighed in Henry's mind in desiring a divorce. The first child to survive was Princess Mary, born in February, 1516. Henry expressed the hope that sons would follow. But Katharine had no more living children. Henry hoped against hope, and undertook, in the event of her having an heir, to lead a crusade against the Turks. Even this bribe to Heaven proved unavailing. Henry's conscience, which was at best of the utilitarian sort, now began to suffer deep pangs, and in 1525, when Katharine was forty years old and he thirty-four, he gave up hope of the much-needed heir to the throne. The Queen herself thought her childlessness was "a judgment of God, for that her former marriage was made in blood," the innocent Earl of Warwick having been put to death owing to the demand of Ferdinand of Aragon.

Katharine and Anne Boleyn.

The King began to indulge in the superstition that his marriage with a brother's widow was marked with the curse of Heaven. It is perhaps a strange coincidence that Anne Boleyn should have appeared on the scene at this moment. Katharine seems always to have regarded her rival with charity and pity. When

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one of her gentlewomen began to curse Anne as the cause of the Queen's misery, the Queen stopped her. "Curse her not," she said, "but rather pray for her; for even now is the time fast coming when you shall have reason to pity her and lament her case."

Her Dignity.

Undoubtedly Katharine's most notable quality was her dignity. Even her enemies regarded her with respect. She was always sustained by the greatness of her soul, her life of right doing, and her feeling of being "a Queen and daughter of a King." Through all her bitter trials she went, a pathetic figure, untouched by calumny. If she had any faults they are certainly not recorded in history. Her farewell letter to the King would seem to be very characteristic of Katharine's beauty of character. She knew the hand of death was upon her. She had entreated the King, but Henry had refused her request, for a last interview with her daughter Mary.

With this final cruelty fresh in her mind she still could write: "My lord and dear husband,—I commend me unto you. The hour of my death draweth fast on, and my case being such, the tender love I owe you forceth me with a few words, to put you in remembrance of the health and safeguard of your soul, which you ought to prefer before all worldly matters, and before the care

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and tendering of your own body, for the which you have cast me into many miseries and yourself into many cares. For my part I do pardon you all, yea, I do wish and devoutly pray God that He will pardon you."

ANNE BOLEYN

Her Character.

The estimation of the character of Anne Boleyn would seem to be as varied as the spelling of her name. She is believed to have been born in 1507. The Boleyns or Bullens were a Norfolk family of French origin, but her mother was of noble blood, being daughter of the Earl of Ormonde, and so a descendant of Edward I. It is a curious fact that all of Henry's wives can trace their descent from this King. Of Anne's early life little is known save that she was sent as Maid of Honour to the French Queen Claude. She was probably about nineteen years old when she was recalled to the English Court and began her round of revels and love intrigues. Certainly she was a born leader of men; many have denied her actual beauty, but she had the greater quality of charm, the power of subjugating, the beckoning eye. An accomplished dancer, we read of her "as leaping and jumping with infinite grace and agility." "She dressed with marvellous taste and devised new robes," but of the ladies who

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copied her, we read that unfortunately "none wore them with her gracefulness, in which she rivalled Venus." Music, too, was added to her accomplishments, and Cavendish tells us how "when she composed her hands to play and her voice to sing, it was joined with that sweetness of countenance that three harmonies concurred."

Anne Boleyn and Wolsey.

It is difficult to speak with unalloyed admiration of Anne's virtue. At the most charitable computation, she was an outrageous flirt. It would seem that she was genuinely in love with Lord Percy, and that Wolsey was ordered by the then captivated and jealous King to put an end to their intrigue and their desire to marry. Anne is supposed never to have forgiven Wolsey for this, and by a dramatic irony it was her former lover, Percy, then become Earl of Northumberland, who was sent to arrest the fallen Cardinal at York. It is said that he treated Wolsey in a brutal manner, having his legs bound to the stirrup of his mule like a common criminal. When Henry, in his infatuation for the attractive Lady-in-Waiting to his Queen, as she then was, wished Wolsey to become the aider and abettor of his love affairs, Wolsey found himself placed in the double capacity of man of God and man of Kings. In these cases, God is apt to go to the wall—for the time being. But it was Wolsey's vain attempt to serve two

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masters that caused his fall, which the French Ambassador attributed entirely to the ill offices of Anne Boleyn. This is another proof that courtiers should always keep on the right side of women.

Influence with the King.

Nothing could stop Henry's passion for Anne, and she showed her wonderful cleverness in the way she kept his love alive for years, being first created Marchioness of Pembroke, and ultimately triumphing over every obstacle and gaining her wish of being his Queen. This phase of her character has been nicely touched by Shakespeare's own deft hand. She was crowned with unparalleled splendour on Whit Sunday of 1533. At the banquet held after the Coronation of Anne Boleyn, we read that two countesses stood on either side of Anne's chair and often held a "fine cloth before the Queen's face whenever she listed to spit." "And under the table went two gentlewomen, and sat at the Queen's feet during the dinner." The courtier's life, like the burglar's, does not appear to have been one of unmixed happiness.

Sir Thomas More.

In the same year she bore Henry a child, but, to everyone's disappointment, it proved to be a girl, who was christened Elizabeth, destined to become the great Queen of England. Anne's triumph was pathetically brief. Her most important act was that of getting the publication

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of the Bible authorised in England. Two years after her coronation, Sir Thomas More, who had refused to swear fealty to the King's heir by Anne, and had been thrown into prison and was awaiting execution, asked "How Queen Anne did?" "There is nothing else but dancing and sporting," was the answer. "These dances of hers," he said, "will prove such dances that she will spurn our heads off like footballs, but it will not be long ere her head dance the like dance." In a year's time, this prophecy came true. Her Lady-in-Waiting, the beautiful Jane Seymour, stole the King from her who in her time had betrayed her Royal mistress.

Her Last Message to the King.

There are two versions with regard to her last feelings towards the King. Lord Bacon writes that just before her execution she said: "Commend me to His Majesty and tell him he hath ever been constant in his career of advancing me. From a private gentlewoman he made me a marchioness, from a marchioness a Queen; and now he hath left no higher degree of honour, he gives my innocency the crown of martyrdom." This contains a fine sting of satire. Another chronicler gives us her words as follows: "I pray God to save the King, and send him long to reign over you, for a gentler or more merciful prince was there never." One

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cannot but think that this latter version of her dying words may have been edited by his Grace of Canterbury.

If it is difficult to reconcile Anne's heartlessness with her piety, it should be remembered that cruelty is often the twin-sister of religious fervour.

Whatever may have been her failings of character, whatever misfortunes she may have suffered during her life, Anne will ever live in history as one of the master mistresses of the world.

THE DIVORCE

Let us go back awhile to the King's first wife, Katharine of Aragon.

As to the divorce, it will be well to clear away the enormous amount of argument, of vituperation and prevarication by which the whole question is obscured, and to seek by the magnet of common sense to find the needle of truth in this vast bundle of hay.

The Succession.

The situation was complicated. In those days it was generally supposed that no woman could succeed to the throne, and a male successor was regarded as a political necessity. Charles V., too, was plotting to depose Henry and to proclaim James V. as ruler of England, or Mary, who was to be married to an English noble for this purpose.

The Duke of Buckingham was the most

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formidable possible heir to the throne, were the King to die without male heirs. His execution took place in 1521. Desperate men take desperate remedies. Now, in 1519, Henry had a natural son by Elizabeth Blount, sister of Lord Mountjoy. This boy Henry contemplated placing on the throne, so causing considerable uneasiness to the Queen. In 1525 he was created Duke of Richmond. Shortly after he was made Lord High Admiral of England and Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. It was suggested that he should marry a Royal princess. Another suggestion was that he should marry his half-sister, an arrangement which seems to have commended itself to the Pope, on condition that Henry abandoned his divorce from Queen Katharine! But this was not to be, and Mary was betrothed to the French prince. An heir must be obtained somehow, and the divorce, therefore, took more and more tangible shape. A marriage with Anne Boleyn was the next move. To attain this object, Henry applied himself with his accustomed energy. His conscience walked hand in hand with expediency.

To Rome, Henry sent many embassies and to the Universities of Christendom much gold, in order to persuade them to yield to the dictates of his conscience. His passion for marriage-lines in his amours was one of Henry's most distinguishing qualities.

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In 1527 a union between Francis I. and the Princess Mary was contemplated. Here the question of Mary's legitimacy was debated, and this gave Henry another excuse for regarding the divorce as necessary. Here was a "pretty kettle of fish."

Wolsey's Position.

There can be little doubt that as a man of God, Wolsey strongly disapproved of the divorce, but as the King's Chancellor he felt himself bound to urge his case to the best of his ability. He was in fact the advocate—the devil's advocate—under protest. One cannot imagine a more terrible position for a man of conscience to be placed in, but once even a cardinal embarks in politics the working of his conscience is temporarily suspended. In world politics the Ten Commandments are apt to become a negligible quantity.

Henry's conscience was becoming more and more tender. Much may be urged in favour of the divorce from a political point of view, and no doubt Henry had a powerful faculty of self-persuasion—such men can grow to believe that whatever they desire is right, that "there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so." It is a pity, however, that Henry's scruples did not assert themselves before the marriage with Katharine of Aragon, for the ethical arguments against such a union were then equally strong. Indeed, these

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scruples appear to have been a "family failing," for Henry's sister Margaret, Queen of Scotland, obtained a dispensation of divorce from Rome on far slenderer grounds. To make matters worse for Henry, Rome was sacked—the Pope was a prisoner in the Emperor's hands. In this state of things, the Pope was naturally disinclined to give offence to the Emperor by divorcing his aunt (Katharine of Aragon).

At all costs, the Pope must be set free—on this errand Wolsey now set out for France. But Charles V. was no less wily than Wolsey, and dispatched Cardinal Quignon to Rome to frustrate his endeavours, and to deprive Wolsey of his legatine powers. A schism between Henry and Wolsey was now asserting itself—Wolsey being opposed to the King's union with Anne Boleyn. ("We'll no Anne Boleyns for him!") Wolsey desired that the King should marry the French King's sister, in order to strengthen his opposition to Charles V. of Spain.

The Cardinal was indeed in an unenviable position. If the divorce succeeded, then his enemy, Anne Boleyn, would triumph; and he would fall. If the divorce failed, then Henry would thrust from him the agent who had failed to secure the object of his master. And in his fall the Cardinal would drag down the Church. It is said that Wolsey secretly opposed the divorce.

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This is fully brought out in Shakespeare's play, and is indeed the main cause of Wolsey's fall.

The King's Dilemma.

There was for Henry now only one way out of the dilemma into which the power of the Pope had thrown him—that was to obtain a dispensation for a bigamous marriage. It seems that Henry himself cancelled the proposition before it was made. This scruple was unnecessary, for the Pope himself secretly made a proposition "that His Majesty might be allowed two wives."

The sanction for the marriage with Anne Boleyn was obtained without great difficulty—but it was to be subject to the divorce from Katharine being ratified. Thus the King was faced with another obstacle. At this moment began the struggle for supremacy at Rome between English and Spanish influence. The Pope had to choose between the two; Charles V. was the victor, whereupon Henry cut the Gordian knot by throwing over the jurisdiction of Rome. Wolsey was in a position of tragic perplexity. He was torn by his allegiance to the King, and his zeal for the preservation of the Church. He wrote: "I cannot reflect upon it and close my eye, for I see ruin, infamy and subversion of the whole dignity and estimation of the See Apostolic if this course is persisted in." But Pope Clement dared not

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offend the Emperor Charles, who was his best, because his most powerful ally, and had he not proved his power by sacking Rome? The Pope, although quite ready to grant dispensations for a marriage of Princess Mary and her half-brother the Duke of Richmond, though he was ready to grant Margaret's divorce, could not afford to stultify the whole Papal dignity by revoking the dispensation he had originally given that Henry should marry his brother's wife. Truly an edifying imbroglio! Henry was desirous of shifting the responsibility on God through the Pope—the Pope was sufficiently astute to wish to put the responsibility on the devil through Henry. There was one other course open—that course the Pope took.

The Pope's Commission.

In 1528 he gave a Commission to Wolsey and Cardinal Campeggio to try the case themselves, and pronounce sentence. Back went the embassy to England. Wolsey saw through the device, for the Pope was still free to revoke the Commission. Indeed Clement's attitude towards Henry was dictated entirely by the fluctuating fortune of Charles V., Emperor of Spain. Meanwhile, Charles won another battle against the French, and the Pope at once gave secret instructions to Campeggio to procrastinate, assuring Charles that nothing would be done which should

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be to the detriment of Katharine. The wily Campeggio (emissary of the Pope) at first sought to persuade Henry to refrain from the divorce. Henry refused. Thereupon he endeavoured to persuade Katharine voluntarily to enter a nunnery. Among all these plotters and intriguers, Katharine, adamant in her virtue, maintained her position as lawful wife and Queen.

When Wolsey and Campeggio visited the Queen she was doing needlework with her maids. It appears (and this is important as showing the inwardness of Wolsey's attitude in the matter of the divorce) that "from this interview the Queen gained over both legates to her cause; indeed, they would never pronounce against her, and this was the head and front of the King's enmity to his former favourite Wolsey." In the first instance, Wolsey was undoubtedly a party, however unwilling, to the separation of the King and Queen, in order that Henry might marry the brilliant and high-minded sister of Francis I., the Duchess of Alençon. That lady would not listen to such a proposal, lest it should break the heart of Queen Katharine. Wolsey was, either from personal enmity towards Anne Boleyn or from his estimate of her character, or from both, throughout opposed to the union with that lady.

Subsequently the King sent to Katharine a deputation from his Council announcing that he

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had, by the advice of Cranmer, obtained the opinions of the universities of Europe concerning the divorce, and found several which considered it expedient. He therefore entreated her, for the quieting of his conscience, that she would refer the matter to the arbitration of four English prelates and four nobles. The Queen received the message in her chamber, and replied to it: "God grant my husband a quiet conscience, but I mean to abide by no decision excepting that of Rome." This infuriated the King.

Trial of Katharine.

After many delays and the appearance of a document which was declared by one side to be a forgery, and by the other to be genuine, the case began on May 31st, 1529. In the great hall of Blackfriars both the King and Queen appeared in person to hear the decision of the Court. The trial itself is very faithfully rendered in Shakespeare's play. Finding the King obdurate, Katharine protested against the jurisdiction of the Court, and appealing finally to Rome, withdrew from Blackfriars.

Judgment was to be delivered on July 23rd, 1529. Campeggio rose in the presence of the King and adjourned the Court till October. This was the last straw, and the last meeting of the Court. Henry had lost. Charles was once more

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in the ascendant. England and France had declared war on him in 1528, but England's heart was not in the enterprise—the feeling of hatred toward Wolsey became widespread. Henry and Charles made terms of peace, and embraced once more after a bloodless and (for England) somewhat ignominious war. The French force was utterly defeated in battle. The Pope and Charles signed a treaty—all was nicely arranged. The Pope's nephew was to marry the Emperor's natural daughter; certain towns were to be restored to the Pope, who was to crown Charles with the Imperial crown. The participators in the sacking of Rome were to be absolved from sin; the proceedings against the Emperor's aunt, Katharine, were to be null and void. If Katharine could not obtain justice in England, Henry should not have his justice in Rome. The Pope and the Emperor kissed again, and Henry finally cut himself adrift from Rome. It was the failure of the divorce that made England a Protestant country.

The Reformation.

Henry now openly defied the Pope, by whom he was excommunicated, and so "deprived of the solace of the rites of religion; when he died he must lie without burial, and in hell suffer torment for ever." The mind shrinks from contemplating the tortures to which the soul of His Majesty might have been eternally subjected

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but for the timely intervention of his Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury!

So far from Henry suffering in a temporal sense, he continued to defy the opinion and the power of the world. He showed his greatness by looking public opinion unflinchingly in the face; by ignoring he conquered it. Amid the thunderous roarings of the Papal bull, Henry stood—as we see him in his picture—smiling and indifferent. "I never saw the King merrier than now," wrote a contemporary in 1533. Henry always had good cards—now he held the ace of public opinion up his sleeve.

Wolsey, although averse to the Queen's divorce and the marriage of Anne Boleyn, expressed himself in terms of the strongest opposition to the overbearing Pope. A few days before the Papal revocation arrived, the Cardinal wrote thus: "If the King be cited to appear at Rome in person or by proxy, and his prerogative be interfered with, none of his subjects will tolerate it. If he appears in Italy, it will be at the head of a formidable army." Opposed as they were to the divorce, the English people were of one mind with Wolsey in this attitude.

Henry was not slow to avail himself of the new development, and he made the divorce become in the eyes of the people but a secondary consideration to the pride of England. He drew the red

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herring of the Reformation across the trail of the divorce. The King and his Parliament held that the Church should not meddle with temporal affairs. The Church was the curer of souls, not the curer of the body politic.

Katharine's cause sank into the background. The voice of justice was drowned by the birth shrieks of the Reformation.

THE REFORMATION

We must remind ourselves that the divorce was merely the irritation which brought the discontent with Rome to a head. Religious affairs were in a very turbulent state. The monasteries were corrupt. The rule of Rome had become political, not spiritual. Luther had worked at shattering the pretensions of the Pope in Europe. Wolsey had prepared the English to acquiesce in Henry's religious supremacy by his long tenure of the whole Papal authority within the realm and the consequent suspension of appeals to Rome. Translations of the New Testament were being secretly read throughout the country—a most dangerous innovation—and Anne Boleyn, who had no cause to love the Pope or his power, held complete sway over the King.

She and her father were said to be "more Lutheran than Luther himself." Though Henry was anti-Papal, he was never anti-Catholic, but,

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as the representative of God, as head of his own Church, he claimed to take precedence of the Pope. Moreover, the spoliation of the Church was not an unprofitable business.

Rome declared the divorce illegal. Henry, with the support of his Parliament, abolished all forms of tribute to Rome, arranged that the election of bishops should take place without the interference of the Pope, and declared that if he did not consent to the King's wishes within three months, the whole of his authority in England should be transferred to the Crown. This conditional abolition of the Papal authority was in due course made absolute, and the King assumed the title of Head of the Church.

"The breach with Rome was effected with a cold and calculated cunning, which the most adept disciple of Machiavelli could not have excelled."—(Pollard.)

With an adroitness amounting to genius, Henry now used the moral suasion (not to use an uglier word) of threats towards the Church to induce the Pope to relent and to assent to the divorce. One by one, in this deadly battle, did the Pope's prerogatives vanish, until the sacerdotal foundations of Rome, so far as England was concerned, had been levelled to the ground.

After many further political troubles and intrigues Henry prevailed on Cranmer, now Arch-

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bishop of Canterbury, as head of the Church, to declare the marriage between himself and Katharine to be null and void, and five days later Cranmer declared that Henry and Anne Boleyn were lawfully married. On June 1st, 1533, the Archbishop crowned Anne as Queen in Westminster Abbey. Shortly after she gave birth to a daughter, who was christened Elizabeth, and became Queen of England.

Beyond this incident, with which the strange eventful history of Shakespeare's play ends, it is not proposed to travel in these notes, which are but intended as a brief chronicle that may guide the play-goer (sometimes a hasty reader) to realise the conditions of Henry's reign.

MANNERS AND CUSTOMS

In the days of Henry VIII., the ways of society differed from our own more in observance than in spirit. Though the gay world danced and gambled very late, it rose very early. Its conversation was coarse and lacked reserve. The ladies cursed freely. Outward show and ceremony were considered of the utmost importance. Hats were worn by the men in church and at meals, and only removed in the presence of the King and Cardinal. Kissing was far more prevalent as a mode of salutation. The Court society spent the greater

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part of its income on clothes. To those in the King's set, a thousand pounds was nothing out of the way to spend on a suit of clothes. The predominant colours at Court were crimson and green; the Tudor colours were green and white. It was an age of magnificent plate, and the possession and display of masses of gold and silver plate were considered as a sign of power. Later on in Shakespeare's time, not only the nobles, but also the better-class citizens boasted collections of plate.

A quaint instance of the recognition of distinctions of rank is afforded by certain "Ordinances" that went forth as the "Bouche of Court." Thus a duke or duchess was allowed in the morning one chet loaf, one manchet and a gallon of ale; in the afternoon one manchet and one gallon of ale; and for after supper one chet loaf, one manchet, one gallon of ale and a pitcher of wine, besides torches, etc. A countess, however, was allowed nothing at all after supper, and a gentleman usher had no allowance for morning or afternoon. These class distinctions must have weighed heavily upon humbler beings, such as countesses; but perhaps they consumed more at table to make up for these after-meal deficiences.

Table manners were a luxury as yet undreamed of. The use of the fork was a new fashion just being introduced from France and Spain.

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A NOTE ON THE PRODUCTION OF *HENRY VIII.* AT HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE

It will be seen that the period of Henry VIII. was characterised by great sumptuousness; indeed, the daily life of the Court was compact of revels, masques and displays of splendour.

Henry VIII. is largely a pageant play. As such it was conceived and written; as such did we endeavour to present it to the public. Indeed, it is obvious that it would be far better not to produce the play at all than to do so without those adjuncts, by which alone the action of the play can be illustrated. Of course, it is not possible to do more than indicate on the stage the sumptuousness of the period of history covered by the play; but it was hoped that an impression would be conveyed to our own time of Henry in his habit as he lived, of his people, of the architecture, and of the manners and customs of that great age.

The Text.

It was thought desirable to omit almost in their entirety those portions of the play which deal with the Reformation, being as they are practically devoid of dramatic interest and calculated, as they are, to weary an audience. In taking this course, I felt the less hesitation as there can be

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no doubt that all these passages were from the first omitted in Shakespeare's own representations of the play.

We have incontrovertible evidence that, in Shakespeare's time, *Henry VIII.* was played in "two short hours."

"... Those that come to see
Only a show or two and so agree
The play may pass. If they be still and willing
I'll undertake may see away their shilling
Richly in two short hours."

These words, addressed to the audience in the prologue, make it quite clear that a considerable portion of the play was considered by the author to be superfluous to the dramatic action—and so it is. Acted without any waits whatsoever, *Henry VIII.*, as it is written, would take at least three hours and a half in the playing. Although we were not able to compass the performance within the prescribed "two short hours," for we showed a greater respect for the preservation of the text than did Shakespeare himself, an attempt was made to confine the absolute spoken words as nearly as possible within the time prescribed in the prologue.

In the dramatic presentation of the play, there are many passages of intensely moving interest, the action and characters are drawn with a remarkable fidelity to the actualities. As

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has been suggested, however, the play depends more largely than do most of Shakespeare's works on those outward displays to realise which an attempt was made on the stage.

That Shakespeare, as a stage-manager, availed himself as far as possible of these adjuncts is only too evident from the fact that it was the firing of the cannon which caused a conflagration and the consequent burning down of the Globe Theatre. The destruction of the manuscripts of Shakespeare's plays was probably due to this calamity. The incident shows a lamentable love of stage-mounting for which some of the critics of the time no doubt took the poet severely to task. In connection with the love of pageantry which then prevailed, it is well known that Shakespeare and Ben Jonson were wont to arrange the masques so much in vogue in their time.

Shakespeare as Stage Manager.

The Globe Theatre was burnt on June 29th, 1613. Thomas Lorkins, in a letter to Sir Thomas Puckering on June 30th, says: "No longer since than yesterday, while Bourbidge his companie were acting at ye Globe the play of Henry 8, and there shooting of certayne chambers in way of triumph; the fire catch and fastened upon the thatch of ye house and there burned so furiously as it consumed ye

The Fire.

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whole house all in lesse than two hours, the people having enough to doe to save themselves."

There are records existing of many other productions of *Henry VIII.* In 1663 it was produced at Lincoln's Inn Fields as a pageant play. The redoubtable Mr. Pepys visited this production, without appearing to have enjoyed the play. In later contrast with him, old Dr. Johnson said that whenever Mrs. Siddons played the part of Katharine, he would "hobble to the theatre to see her."

Other Productions of the Play.

In 1707, *Henry VIII.* was produced at the Haymarket, with an exceptionally strong cast; in 1722 it was done at Drury Lane, in which production Booth played Henry VIII.

In 1727 it was again played at Drury Lane. On this occasion the spectacle of the coronation of Anne Boleyn was added, on which one scene, we are told, £1,000 had been expended. It will come to many as a surprise that so much splendour and so large an expenditure of money were at that time lavished on the stage. The play had an exceptional run of forty nights, largely owing, it is said, to the popularity it obtained through the coronation of George II., which had taken place a few weeks before.

The play was a great favourite of George II.

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and was in consequence frequently revived during his reign. On being asked by a grave nobleman, after a performance at Hampton Court, how the King liked it, Sir Richard Steele replied: "So terribly well, my lord, that I was afraid I should have lost all my actors, for I was not sure the King would not keep them to fill the posts at Court that he saw them so fit for in the play."

In 1744, *Henry VIII.* was given for the first time at Covent Garden, but was not revived until 1772, when it was announced at Covent Garden as "'Henry VIII.,' not acted for 20 years." The coronation was again introduced.

Queen Katharine was one of Mrs. Siddons' great parts. She made her first appearance in this character at Drury Lane in 1788. In 1808 it was again revived, and Mrs. Siddons once more played the Queen, Kemble appearing as Wolsey.

In 1822, Edmund Kean made his first appearance as Wolsey at Drury Lane, but the play was only given four times.

In 1832, the play was revived at Covent Garden with extraordinary splendour, and a magnificent cast. Charles Kemble played King Henry; Mr. Young, Wolsey; Miss Ellen Tree, Anne Boleyn; and Miss Fanny Kemble appeared for the first time as Queen Katharine. Miss Kemble's success

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seems to have been great. We are told that Miss Ellen Tree, as Anne Boleyn, appeared to great disadvantage; "her headdress was the most frightful and unbecoming thing imaginable, though we believe it was taken from one of Holbein's." In those days correctness of costume was considered most lamentable and most laughable. In this production, too, the coronation was substituted for the procession. The criticism adds that "during the progress of the play the public seized every opportunity of showing their dislike of the Bishops, and the moment they came on the stage they were assailed with hissing and hooting, and one of the prelates, in his haste to escape from such a reception, fell prostrate, which excited bursts of merriment from all parts of the house."

In 1855, Charles Kean revived the play with his accustomed care and sumptuousness. In this famous revival Mrs. Kean appeared as Queen Katharine.

Sir Henry Irving's magnificent production will still be fresh in the memory of many playgoers. It was admitted on all hands to be an artistic achievement of the highest kind, and Sir Henry Irving was richly rewarded by the support of the public, the play running 208 nights. Miss Ellen Terry greatly distinguished herself in the part of Queen Katharine, contributing in a large

Irving's Production.

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degree to the success of the production. Sir Henry Irving, in the part of Wolsey, made a deep impression. Mr. William Terriss played the King. Mr. Forbes Robertson made a memorable success in the part of Buckingham; and it is interesting to note that Miss Violet Vanbrugh played the part of Anne Boleyn.

The Music.

An outstanding feature of the Lyceum production was Edward German's music. I deemed myself fortunate that this music was available for my production. It may be mentioned that Mr. German composed for me some additional numbers, amongst which is the Anthem sung in the coronation of Anne Boleyn.

Shakespeare's Accuracy of Detail.

I cannot help quoting one passage from Cavendish at length to show how closely Shakespeare keeps to the chronicles of his time. It will be found that Scene 8 of Act I. is practically identical with the following description :—

> The banquets were set forth, with masks and mummeries, in so gorgeous a sort, and costly manner, that it was a heaven to behold.
>
> . . . I have seen the king suddenly come in thither in a mask, with a dozen of other maskers, all in garments like shepherds.
>
> . . . And at his coming and before he came into the hall, ye shall understand that he came by water to the water gate, without any noise; where, against his

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coming, were laid charged many chambers, and at his landing they were all shot off, which made such a rumble in the air, that it was like thunder. It made all the noblemen, ladies and gentlewomen to muse what it should mean coming so suddenly, they sitting quietly at a solemn banquet. Then immediately after this great shot of guns, the Cardinal desired the Lord Chamberlain, and Comptroller, to look what this sudden shot should mean, as though he knew nothing of the matter. They thereupon looking out of the windows into Thames, returned again, and showed him, that it seemed to them there should be some noblemen and strangers arrived at his bridge, as ambassadors from some foreign prince. With that, quoth the Cardinal, "I shall desire you, because ye can speak French, to take the pains to go down into the hall to encounter and to receive them, according to their estates, and to conduct them into this chamber, where they shall see us, and all these noble personages sitting merrily at our banquet, desiring them to sit down with us and to take part of our fare and pastime." Then they went incontinent down into the hall, where they received them with twenty new torches, and conveyed them up into the chamber, with such a number of drums and fifes as I have seldom seen together, at one time in any masque. At their arrival into the chamber, two and two together, they went directly before the Cardinal where he sat, saluting him very reverently, to whom the Lord Chamberlain for them said: "Sir, forasmuch as they be strangers, and can speak no English, they have desired me to declare unto your Grace thus: they, having understanding of this your triumphant banquet, where was assembled such a number of excellent fair dames, could do no less, under the supportation of your good grace, but to repair hither to view as well their incomparable beauty, as for to accompany them to mumchance, and then

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after to dance with them, and so to have of them acquaintance. And, sir, they furthermore require of your Grace licence to accomplish the cause of their repair." To whom the Cardinal answered, that he was very well contented they should do so. Then the masquers went first and saluted all the dames as they sat, and then returned to the most worthiest. . . . Then quoth the Cardinal to my Lord Chamberlain, "I pray you," quoth he, "show them that it seemeth me that there should be among them some noble man, whom I suppose to be much more worthy of honour to sit and occupy this room and place than I; to whom I would most gladly, if I knew him, surrender my place according to my duty." Then spake my Lord Chamberlain, unto them in French, declaring my Lord Cardinal's mind, and they rounding him again in the ear, my Lord Chamberlain said to my Lord Cardinal, "Sir, they confess," quoth he, "that among them there is such a noble personage, whom, if your Grace can appoint him from the other, he is contented to disclose himself, and to accept your place most worthily." With that the Cardinal, taking a good advisement among them, at the last, quoth he, "Me seemeth the gentleman with the black beard should be even he." And with that he arose out of his chair, and offered the same to the gentleman in the black beard, with his cap in his hand. The person to whom he offered then his chair was Sir Edward Neville, a comely knight of goodly personage, that much more resembled the King's person in that mask, than any other. The King, hearing and perceiving the Cardinal so deceived in his estimation and choice, could not forbear laughing; but plucked down his visor, and Master Neville's also, and dashed out with such a pleasant countenance and cheer, that all noble estates there assembled, seeing the king to be there amongst them, rejoiced very much.

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If Shakespeare could be so true to the actualities, why should not we seek to realise the scene so vividly described by the chronicler and the dramatist?

In my notes and conclusions on "Henry VIII. and his Court" I have been largely indebted to the guidance of the following books:

Ernest Law's "History of Hampton Court"; Strickland's "Queens of England"; Taunton's "Thomas Wolsey, Legate and Reformer"; and Cavendish's "Life of Wolsey."

AN APOLOGY AND A FOOTNOTE

Here I am tempted to hark back to the modern manner of producing Shakespeare, and to say a few words in extenuation of those methods, which have been assailed with almost equal brilliancy and vehemence.

We are told that there are two different kinds of plays, the realistic and the symbolic. There are, as a matter of fact, nine and ninety different kinds of plays; but let that pass. Grant only two. Shakespeare's plays, we are assured, belong to the symbolic category. "The scenery," it is insisted, "not only may, but should be imperfect." This seems an extraordinary doctrine, for if it be right that a play should be imperfectly mounted, it follows that it should be imperfectly acted,

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and further that it should be imperfectly written. The modern methods, we are assured, employed in the production of Shakespeare, do not properly illustrate the play, but are merely made for vulgar display, with the result of crushing the author and obscuring his meaning. In this assertion, I venture to think that our critic is mistaken; I claim that not the least important mission of the modern theatre is to give to the public representations of history which shall be at once an education and a delight. To do this, the manager should avail himself of the best archæological and artistic help his generation can afford him, while endeavouring to preserve what he believes to be the spirit and the intention of the author.

It is of course possible for the technically informed reader to imagine the wonderful and stirring scenes which form part of the play without visualising them. It is, I contend, better to reserve Shakespeare for the study than to see him presented half-heartedly.

The merely archaic presentation of the play can be of interest only to those epicures who do not pay their shilling to enter the theatre. The contemporary theatre must make its appeal to the great public, and I hold that while one should respect every form of art, that art which appeals only to a coterie is on a lower plane than that

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which speaks to the world. Surely, it is not too much to claim that a truer and more vivid impression of a period of history can be given by its representation on the stage than by any other means of information. Though the archæologist with symbolic leanings may cry out, the theatre is primarily for those who love the drama, who love the joy of life and the true presentation of history. It is only secondarily for those who fulfil their souls in footnotes.

Personally, I have been a sentimental adherent of symbolism since my first Noak's Ark. Ever since I first beheld the generous curves of Mrs. Noah, and first tasted the insidious carmine of her lips, have I regarded that lady as symbolical of the supreme type of womanhood. I have learnt that the most exclusive symbolists, when painting a meadow, regard purple as symbolical of bright green; but we live in a realistic age and have not yet overtaken the new art of the pale future. It is difficult to deal seriously with so much earnestness. I am forced into symbolic parable. Artemus Ward, when delivering a lecture on his great moral panorama, pointed with his wand to a blur on the horizon, and said: "Ladies and gentlemen, that is a horse—the artist who painted that picture called on me yesterday with tears in his eyes, and said he would disguise that fact from me no longer!" He, too, was a symbolist.

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I hold that whatever may tend to destroy the illusion and the people's understanding is to be condemned. Whatever may tend to heighten the illusion and to help the audience to a better understanding of the play and the author's meaning, is to be commended. Shakespeare and Burbage, Betterton, Colley Cibber, the Kembles, the Keans, Phelps, Calvert and Henry Irving, as artists, recognised that there was but one way to treat the play of *Henry VIII.* It is pleasant to sin in such good company.

I contend that *Henry VIII.* is essentially a realistic and not a symbolic play. Indeed, probably no English author is less "symbolic" than Shakespeare. *Hamlet* is a play which, to my mind, does not suffer by the simplest setting; indeed, a severe simplicity of treatment seems to me to assist rather than to detract from the imaginative development of that masterpiece. But I hold that, with the exception of certain scenes in *The Tempest*, no plays of Shakespeare are susceptible to what is called "symbolic" treatment. To attempt to present *Henry VIII.* in other than a realistic manner would be to ensure absolute failure. Let us take an instance from the text. By what symbolism can Shakespeare's stage directions in the Trial Scene be represented on the stage?

"A Hall in Blackfriars. Enter two vergers

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with short silver wands; next them two scribes in the habit of doctors. . . . Next them with some small distance, follows a gentleman bearing the purse with the great seal and a Cardinal's hat; then two priests bearing each a silver cross; then a gentleman usher bareheaded, accompanied with a sergeant-at-arms bearing a silver mace; then two gentlemen bearing two great silver pillars; After them, side by side, the two Cardinals, Wolsey and Campeius; two noblemen with the sword and mace," etc.

I confess my symbolic imagination was completely gravelled, and in the absence of any symbolic substitute, I have been compelled to fall back on the stage directions.

Yet we were gravely told by the writer of an article that "all Shakespeare's plays" lend themselves of course to such symbolic treatment. We hear, indeed, that the National Theatre is to be run on symbolic lines. If it be so, then God help the National Theatre—the symbolists will not. No "ism" ever made a great cause. The National Theatre, to be the dignified memorial we all hope it may be, will owe its birth, its being and its preservation to the artists, who alone are the guardians of any art. It is the painter, not the frame-maker, who upholds the art of painting; it is the poet, not the book-binder, who carries the torch of poetry. It was the sculptor, and not the owner of the quarry,

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who made the Venus of Milo. It is sometimes necessary to re-assert the obvious.

Now there are plays in which symbolism is appropriate—those of Maeterlinck, for instance. But if, as has been said, Maeterlinck resembles Shakespeare, Shakespeare does not resemble Maeterlinck. Let us remember that Shakespeare was a humanist, not a symbolist.

The End.

The end of the play of *Henry VIII.* once more illustrates the pageantry of realism, as prescribed in the elaborate directions as to the christening of the new-born princess.

It is this incident of the christening of the future Queen Elizabeth that brings to an appropriate close the strange eventful history as depicted in the play of *Henry VIII.* And thus the injustice of the world is once more triumphantly vindicated: Wolsey, the devoted servant of the King, has crept into an ignominous sanctuary; Katharine has been driven to a martyr's doom; the adulterous union has been blessed by the Court of Bishops; minor poets have sung their blasphemous pæans in unison. The offspring of Anne Boleyn, over whose head the Shadow of the Axe is already hovering, has been christened amid the acclamations of the mob; the King paces forth to hold the child up to the gaze of a shouting populace, accompanied by the Court and the Clergy—trumpets

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blare, drums roll, the organ thunders, cannons boom, hymns are sung, the joy bells are pealing. A lonely figure in black enters weeping. It is the Fool!

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CHRONOLOGY OF PUBLIC EVENTS DURING THE LIFETIME OF KING HENRY VIII

1491. Birth of Henry, second son of Henry VII. and Elizabeth of York.

1501. Marriage of Arthur, Prince of Wales, eldest son of Henry VII. and Elizabeth of York, to Katharine of Aragon, daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain.

1502. Death of Arthur, Prince of Wales.

1509. Death of King Henry VII.
Marriage of Henry VIII. at Westminster Abbey with Katharine of Aragon, his brother's widow.
Thomas Wolsey made King's Almoner.

1511. Thomas Wolsey called to the King's Council.
The Holy League established by the Pope.

1512. War with France.

1513. Battles of the Spurs and of Flodden.
Wolsey becomes Chief Minister.

1516. Wolsey made Legate.
Dissolution of the Holy League.

1517. Luther denounces Indulgences.

1520. Henry meets Francis at "Field of Cloth of Gold."
Luther burns the Pope's Bull.

1521. Quarrel of Luther with Henry.
Henry's book against Luther presented to the Pope.
Pope Leo confers on Henry the title "*Fidei Defensor.*"

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King Henry VIII.

1522. Renewal of war with France.

1523. Wolsey quarrels with the Commons on question of 20 per cent. property tax.

1525. Benevolences of one-tenth from the laity and of one-fourth from clergy demanded.
Exaction of Benevolences defeated.
Peace with France.

1527. Henry resolves on a Divorce.
Sack of Rome.

1528. Pope Clement VII. issues a commission to the Cardinals Wolsey and Campeggio for a trial of the facts on which Henry's application for a divoree was based.

1529. Trial of Queen Katharine at Blackfriars Hall.
Katharine appeals to Rome.
Fall of Wolsey. Ministry of Norfolk and Sir Thomas More.
Rise of Thomas Cromwell.

1530. Wolsey arrested for treason.
Wolsey's death at Leicester Abbey.

1531. Henry acknowledged as "Supreme Head of the Church of England."

1533. Henry secretly marries Anne Boleyn.
Cranmer, in Archbishop of Canterbury's Court, declares Katharine's marriage invalid and the marriage of Henry and Anne lawful. Anne Boleyn crowned Queen in Westminster Abbey.
Birth of Elizabeth (Queen Elizabeth).

1535. Henry's title as Supreme Head of the Church incorporated in the royal style by letters patent.
Execution of Sir Thomas More.

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King Henry VIII.

1536. English Bible issued.
Dissolution of lesser Monasteries.
Death of Katharine of Aragon.
Execution of Anne Boleyn.
Henry's marriage with Jane Seymour.

1537. Birth of Edward VI.
Death of Jane Seymour.
Dissolution of greater Monasteries.

1540. Henry's marriage with Anne of Cleves.
Execution of Thomas Cromwell.
Henry divorces Anne of Cleves.
Henry's marriage with Catherine Howard.

1542. Execution of Catherine Howard.
Completion of the Tudor Conquest of Ireland.

1543. War with France.
Henry's marriage with Catherine Parr.

1547. Death of Henry. Age 55 years and 7 months.
He reigned 37 years and 9 months.

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ON CLOSING THE BOOK THAT SHAKESPEARE WROTE

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ON CLOSING THE BOOK THAT SHAKESPEARE WROTE

HOW different is the mood in which we approach Shakespeare when we see his works acted on the stage, and when we read them in the privacy of the study!

When "sitting at a play," the recipients of impressions through the eye and the ear, we abandon ourselves to the torrent of the dramatist's genius, and are borne along without thought or care of text or readings. In the magic atmosphere of the theatre, we merely feel the throb of humanity which beats in the flesh and blood of the poet's creations. How often will the actor by a flash of passion illumine a dark passage which had remained obscure in the calm twilight of the library!

In the seclusion of the study the case is vastly different. We become critical, inquisitive, and at times even destructive. We stop each moment to try and discover some hidden beauty, the exact meaning of some obscure allusion, or the

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comparative value of alternative suggestions. It is impossible to deny that this practice often opens up to us charms and treasures unhoped for and unexpected. Unfortunately in such leisurely and detailed examination of a play we too often lose sight of the grandeur of its general theme and scheme; and the author's primary object—to give a living expression to his work by having it acted on the stage—is obliterated.

What I would urge, then, is a study of the text of our great dramatist supplemented, whenever possible, by a visit to the theatre where the play under consideration is being performed. Whether Shakespeare, in writing to supply the demands of the contemporary stage, intended a philosophy deeper than can be given forth and received at one presentation, matters little—the message of his work will reach us at the first hearing of an intelligent rendering. And this should content us. We know that Shakespeare's plays were primarily, if not exclusively, meant for the stage; divorced from it, no full appreciation of the dramatist's genius is obtainable.

When reading the dramas we really only concentrate our attention on the words before us, and give but a passing thought to how those words may be vitalised by the assistance of the actor's art, and of the resources at the command of the scene-painter, the property-master, and the stage-

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manager. Indeed, a nice examination of his stage-directions shows that Shakespeare not only counted upon the potentialities of his own theatre to give point and life to his text, but that he also, with the prophetic eye of his genius, foresaw the time when a later stage would achieve for him, in the way of scenery, costumes, and effects, what the playhouse of his own day was powerless to accomplish. Nearly all the dramas are crowded with scenic directions, and although very few of these could have been carried out to the letter in the author's time, those that were attempted must even then have been telling and effective. It is no doubt true that of scenery strictly so called there was next to nothing on the Elizabethan stage; but there was machinery—rough machinery possibly—and on this Shakespeare counted much as a complement to his spoken words. Are not the ghost scenes in *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, and *Richard III.* among the most dramatic that he wrote? And do not the visions of Brutus, Queen Katharine, and Joan of Arc afford some of the most moving that can be taken out of Shakespeare's book and put upon the boards? Yet all these depended on the machinery, or, as we should now term them, the "scenic effects" of the presentation. Again, look how much Shakespeare relied upon the employment of big masses of troops and attendants, and how largely he trusted to their proper grouping and

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training for some of his most striking results. To quote only three familiar examples—the siege operations in *Henry V.*, the parley outside the walls of Angiers in *King John*, and the Forum Scene in *Julius Cæsar*. Let anyone carefully consider this last: how inadequately do the mere words of Antony—eloquent as they are—convey the impression intended by the poet! The breath of the surging multitude is necessary to fill out the sails of his splendid rhetoric. Once we have seen this realised, we return to a perusal of the poet with our imagination aflame with the memory of the howling, shifting mob which the stage has presented to our senses.

In considering the works of Shakespeare as a whole, it is a matter of some wonderment and of no less regret that no real observation of child-life is to be found in the great master's writings. He has given us thirty-five plays, averaging perhaps twenty characters in each, and yet (with the exception of the purely fantastic fairy element of the *Midsummer Night's Dream*) only seven of his works contain very youthful characters, and their number in all amounts to but eleven. There is Moth in *Love's Labour's Lost;* four children in *Richard III.;* two in *Macbeth;* the page to Falstaff in *Henry IV.* and *Henry V.;* Mamillius in *The Winter's Tale;* and Prince Henry and Prince Arthur in *King John*. Prince Arthur, how-

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ever, although by age but a boy, appears, by the passion and dignity with which he is presented, as a full-grown man, and appeals to us by his sufferings and his sayings rather as an adult than an adolescent. His boyhood is taken from him by reason of the great political struggle of which he is the centre, and no one who listens to his words can possibly gather that it is a child who speaks. In fact, whenever in a play of Shakespeare we have children upon the stage, it is through the tragedy of their existence that they figure. It may be urged that children are seldom real upon the stage, and that our greatest dramatist, with his unerring skill, was the first to detect their lack of the dramatic faculty. Yet having given them at all, it is impossible to understand why Shakespeare did not utilise them more than he did as the embodiment of what is bright and joyful and innocent in life; and we can but feel, whatever the reason may have been for this omission, that herein a great opportunity was neglected by the writer, and a great revelation withheld from the reader and the theatre-goer.

The plays of Shakespeare most suitable for stage representation are those which contain a strong love interest; those which rely on our philosophy, or deal with history, have not the same abiding appeal. Probably the plays which are most popular to-day were also the most

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popular in Shakespeare's own age; but whereas in Elizabeth's time the spectators were chiefly men, women are the determining factor in the theatre of to-day. It is the lack of the love element which causes such plays as *Timon of Athens* to be so rarely seen upon the modern stage. Yet that the intellectual interest, as apart from the sentimental, can be awakened nowadays is proved by the fact that two recent productions in which the love interest is almost entirely absent were popular successes—*Julius Cæsar* and *King John*.

In reading Shakespeare's works we feel how thoroughly the same is human nature under all its trappings and in all places. Though he is careless about details, he never strikes a false note; his noble Romans are Romans, and his Greeks are Greeks. He has consulted his authorities wisely and well, and been as true as the knowledge of his age enabled him to be. But his types are, before all, men and women, and all different each from the other. They all *live*. Beatrice and Benedick, Romeo and Juliet, Mercutio and Shylock, are more to us than the acquaintance to whom we bow in the street, or the friend at whose table we dine. The world they live in seems more probable than the medley of contradictions of which life is made up. It is the poet who gives "artistic merit" to his subject in portraying a king or a cobbler. The monarch of Shakespeare's pen is

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often truer to life than the actual man who ate and drank, and woke and slept, and hoped and feared, and loved and hated. Yet Shakespeare is always impersonal and impartial in the drawing of his characters. His own predilections are never forced upon the listener. To each he gives the vices of his virtues and the virtues of his vices. It is this daring blending of the good and the bad that gives to his characters that truth which the courageous and inspired artist alone is capable of breathing into them. History rarely gives us the true man—it often merely records his actions without revealing to us the motives which inform those actions; but the poet reveals through the Röntgen rays of his genius the hidden depths of the inner man. It is possible to conceive, therefore, that the King Richard and the King John of Shakespeare were more true to life than were the counterfeit presentments of history—subject as these records are to the misrepresentations of flatterers and detractors, and subject as are the individuals themselves to self-deception and hypocrisy. Autobiographies are seldom self-revelations. Even Mr. Pepys' candour was probably not intended for posthumous consumption. It may, then, truly be said that the creatures of the poet's imagination are our most intimate friends rather than the men and women among whom we move; and that we win from the perusal of the

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characters so faithfully drawn a greater insight into our common humanity than can be gained from the snapshots of everyday life. When we study Shakespeare to his depths, we find in his works the key to the myriad cells of the human heart. The longer we look into the mirror which he holds up to us, the more luminously do we see the reflection of ourselves in infinite variety.

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FINAL AFTER-THOUGHT

As Homer's songs were immortalised through being sung by father to son, by lover to lover, so does Shakespeare's spirit live not in the printed tomes alone, nor in the musty volumes which hold the countless comments of literary pedants—it lives most triumphantly (I am so bold as to assert) in his irresponsible heirs, Shakespeare's love-children, who sing his songs to each succeeding generation in its own voice, and will yet carry his message to states unborn in accents yet unknown.

As it is the player's chiefest joy to speak the poet's words upon the stage, so is it his high privilege to trace upon the poet's abiding monument his own fleeting name. This modest ambition is my book's apology.

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FINIS

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SHAKESPEAREAN PLAYS PRODUCED UNDER HERBERT BEERBOHM TREE'S MANAGEMENT

AT THE HAYMARKET THEATRE

1889. **The Merry Wives of Windsor.**

1892. **Hamlet.**

1896. **King Henry IV. (Part I.)**

AT HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE

1897. *Hamlet* (revival).
Katherine and Petruchio, being Garrick's abbreviated version of *The Taming of the Shrew.*

1898. **Julius Cæsar.**

1899. **King John.**

1900. **A Midsummer Night's Dream.**
Julius Cæsar (revival).

1901. **Twelfth Night.**

1902. *Twelfth Night* (revival).
The Merry Wives of Windsor (revival).

1903. **King Richard II.**
The Merry Wives of Windsor (revival).

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1904. **The Tempest.**
Twelfth Night (revival).
The Merry Wives of Windsor (revival).

1905. **Much Ado about Nothing.**
First Annual Shakespeare Festival:
King Richard II.
Twelfth Night.
The Merry Wives of Windsor.
Hamlet.
Much Ado About Nothing.
Julius Cæsar.
The Tempest (revival).

1906. **The Winter's Tale.**
Antony and Cleopatra.
Second Annual Shakespeare Festival:
The Tempest.
Hamlet.
King Henry IV. (Part I.)
Julius Cæsar.
The Merry Wives of Windsor.
Twelfth Night.
King Richard II. (revival).

1907. Third Annual Shakespeare Festival:
The Tempest.
The Winter's Tale.
Hamlet.
Twelfth Night.
Julius Cæsar.
The Merry Wives of Windsor.
Berlin Visit:
King Richard II.
Twelfth Night.

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1907. Berlin Visit:
Antony and Cleopatra.
The Merry Wives of Windsor.
Hamlet.

1908. **The Merchant of Venice.**
Fourth Annual Shakespeare Festival:
The Merry Wives of Windsor (revival).
The Merchant of Venice.
Twelfth Night.
Hamlet.

1909. Fifth Annual Shakespeare Festival:
King Richard III. (Mr. F. R. Benson and Company.)
Twelfth Night.
The Merry Wives of Windsor.
Hamlet.
Julius Cæsar.
The Merchant of Venice.
Macbeth. (Mr. Arthur Bourchier's Company.)

1910. Sixth Annual Shakespeare Festival:
The Merry Wives of Windsor.
Julius Cæsar.
Twelfth Night.
Hamlet. (By His Majesty's Theatre Company and by Mr. H. B. Irving's Company.)
The Merchant of Venice. (By His Majesty's Theatre Company and by Mr. Arthur Bourchier's Company.)
King Lear. (Mr. Herbert Trench's Company.)
The Taming of the Shrew. (Mr. F. R. Benson and Company.)
Coriolanus. (Mr. F. R. Benson and Company.)
Two Gentlemen of Verona. (The Elizabethan Stage Society's Company.)

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1910. *King Henry V.* (Mr. Lewis Waller and Company.)
King Richard II.
Scenes from *Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet.*
King Henry VIII.

1911. **Macbeth.**
Seventh Annual Shakespeare Festival:
A Midsummer Night's Dream.
Hamlet. (Mr. H. B. Irving and Company.)
Julius Cæsar.
As You Like It. (Mr. Oscar Asche and Company.)
The Merchant of Venice.
Twelfth Night.
King Richard III. (Mr. Benson and Company.)
The Taming of the Shrew. (Mr. Benson and Company.)
King Henry VIII.
The Merry Wives of Windsor.

1912. **Othello.**
Eighth Annual Shakespeare Festival:
The Merchant of Venice.
Twelfth Night.
King Henry VIII.
Othello.
The Merry Wives of Windsor.
Julius Cæsar.

1913. Ninth Annual Shakespeare Festival:
The Merchant of Venice.
Twelfth Night.
Julius Cæsar.
Romeo and Juliet.

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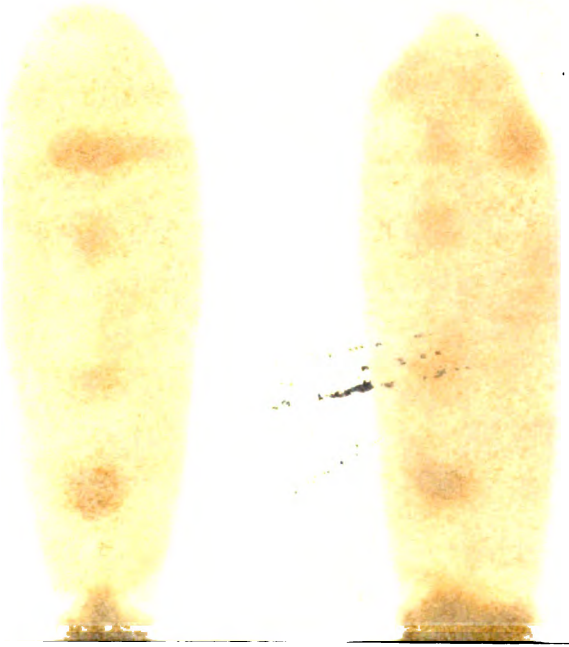

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